Chained

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Chained

by Bad_Wolf_Rising

Summary

This is not how I expected my morning to start, he thinks as he grabs a Gatorade from his fridge. When he comes back, Will is very much on the verge of falling asleep. He sits on the couch and pulls him into his lap.

Hannibal takes care of a boy who passed out in his driveway, and now he won't leave. The thing is, he doesn't want him to.

Chapter 1

When Hannibal wakes up, after his morning cup of coffee, he always goes out to pick up the Sunday paper. Like clockwork, at 9:35, he walks to his mailbox, and he's a little shocked when his paper is not there. How odd. It's never late. Hannibal turns to head inside with a sigh. It's ridiculously hot outside and he wasn't about to wait in the heat. He pauses when he hears the sound of bike tires clicking. He turns to see a boy—he had to be no more than eighteen slowly pushing his bike up the steep hill that he and two others lived on. The boy makes it to his driveway, stops. He leans over his bike, but instead of bracing himself, he slumps, and Hannibal knows this boy's about to pass out.

Though he knows it will do no good, he shouts, "Hey, hey, hey!" as runs to catch him before he could fall with his bike.

Hannibal takes off the backpack he's wearing, shrugs it onto his shoulder, and carries him inside. He's drenched in sweat, skin flushed bright red. Hannibal's first priority is to get him cooled off.

"Pushed yourself too hard, didn't you?" he murmurs as he takes him up to the bathroom, where he strips him and gets him in the shower. He runs cold water over the boy.

Hannibal goes through his pockets and bag. He finds his school ID in his wallet. Will Graham. Digging through his bag, he finds medication: an antidepressant, meds for anxiety, and for seizures. All of which have bad reactions with heat. No wonder Will wasn't doing too well. He checks on Will. He still feels too hot, but he's cooling off. He's starting to wake—he's breathing and mumbling incoherently. Hannibal goes back to going through his bag, and what he finds are three newspapers.

This boy is the paperboy.

He also finds an empty water bottle, an empty bag of chips, and a bottle of aspirin underneath the papers.

"Cold…" he hears the boy mumble.

Hannibal reaches into the shower to check his temperature again. He sighs softly. "Just a little while longer, Will," he says gently. "You're overheated."

"But—"

"There is no need to argue with me, boy. You are in no position to do so."

Hannibal lets him sit a few minutes longer before he turns off the shower. He finds his biggest, fluffiest towel and gently wraps Will in it. There's little protest as he carries him downstairs and settles him on the couch. Will slumps against the arm. *This is not how I expected my morning to start* , he thinks as he grabs a Gatorade from his fridge. When he

comes back, Will is very much on the verge of falling asleep. He sits on the couch and pulls him into his lap.

“Ah, Ah, Ah. Stay with me, Will. Drink.” Will weakly shakes his head, tries to jerk it away from Hannibal’s reaching hand. He grabs his jaw. “You have no choice in the matter. Drink.” He pressed the open bottle to the boy’s chapped lips. Will reluctantly drinks. “Good boy, that’s it.”

Hannibal manages to make him drink almost half a bottle. It’s a good start, and he finally allows Will to fall asleep.

While Will sleeps, he brings down his comforter and a pillow. Afterwards, he tends to his Sunday cleaning. He decides to throw Will's sweaty clothes in with his laundry and brings his bag of belongings downstairs. He finds

an old flip phone in the front pocket. It hasn’t rang, vibrated, or any of the sorts from anyone. Odd. He thinks his parents would be worried about him by now. He makes the boy some lunch and sits it aside.

Hours go by. No call, no text. He goes to check on Will. He’s still sleeping, though the pillow and blanket he has given him are now on the floor, he’s sprawled out. It gives him the chance he study his impromptu guest.

Will is a gorgeous boy. Hannibal sits on the couch, lifts Will’s legs into his lap. He’s small for his age range, not quite malnourished, but definitely underfed. He sees his ribs. He gently pinches the skin under his collarbone. The skin takes a bit to return to its normal place. Will’s still dehydrated, but he could have been in worse shape. His hips are sharp and his legs make up most of his body. Short, dark curls have dried into a frizzy mop on his head. Given Will’s unhealthy state, Hannibal decides to roll him on his side, just to see if there are any signs of abuse. He finds nothing but a single, large handprint around the back of his neck. The bruise is too big to be a woman’s hand— maybe his father? Hannibal settles him back down, tucks the pillow underneath his head, and bundles him back up. He picks up the boom he’s been reading lately.

He gets ten pages in when Will begins to stir. He watches as he rolls onto his back. His eyes slowly open. Hannibal’s taken aback by just how beautiful and stunning his blue eyes are. He’s obviously confused. He doesn’t recognize his surroundings. He lets the boy come to his senses, speaking one he has sat up and made eye contact.

“How are you feeling, Will?” Hannibal asks.

“Like a massive bag of shit,” he says, rubbing his eyes. He blinks as he looks down at himself. He pulls the blanket tighter around himself. “Who are you, and where the fuck am I?”

Hannibal clicks his tongue. “Such a filthy mouth for a young boy,” Hannibal chides. “Dr. Hannibal Lecter. This is my home.”

“Where are my clothes? Why am I naked? Fucking creep—“

“Hush. Your clothes are in the dryer, and you are naked because you passed out in my driveway due to heat exhaustion. So I put you in a cold shower to lower your temperature, I made you drink Gatorade to replace some electrolytes, and then I allowed you to sleep on my couch for the majority of the day. If anything, a ‘thank you’ is in order, dear boy.”

Will looks at Hannibal, lowers his eyes as he drinks in what Hannibal says. Hannibal tilts his head curiously as he waits for an apology.

“I’m sorry I was rude. I—the last thing I remember is trudging up a hill with my bike. Thank you for taking care of me.”

Hannibal smiles. “Good boy. You’re very welcome. Now. I’ve got a simple lunch prepared for you to eat.”

“Thank you.”

Hannibal slips from underneath Will to fetch his lunch. The probably didn’t have breakfast, so he made the boy a yogurt parfait with granola and strawberries. He made a quick fried egg sandwich to give him added protein. Will sat up straight when Hannibal brought it to him. Will practically snatched the plate out of his hands, mumbling his apology between bites. Hannibal hands him his Gatorade. The boy acts like he never eats, the way he is downing the food. It’s such disgusting behavior, but he can look past it. For now.

“You mustn’t push yourself so hard, Will. You could have had a heatstroke, and you would have woken up in an emergency room instead of on my couch. Especially with your medication. They don’t fare well with the heat.”

Will looks down at his empty plate and cup. “I’m on my last strike. I just gotta pace myself better, is all…You’re the last house on my route.”

Hannibal tilts his head thoughtfully. “Hm..What are some things that you will eat, Will?”

Now it is Will’s turn to tilt his head curiously. He looks up at Hannibal, blue eyes shining bright, now that he feels better. “Why?”

“I have space in my fridge for a few things for you. I’ll invest in some sports drinks and snacks for you. I’ll leave my door unlocked for you on Sundays. You can simply come in, grab a drink from the fridge, as well as have something to eat, even if I am not here or I am asleep.”

Will blinks. “Oh, no, Dr. Lecter, you don’t have to do that—“

“I’m aware, boy. I never do anything I don’t want to do.” Hannibal smiles. “Now, focus. Snacks?”

“Chicken nuggets are a good choice, uh…peanut butter and jelly—preferably apple. I mean, general safe foods for kids?”

Hannibal chuckles softly. “I’ll come up with some things for you. For now, I’ll get your clothes, and I’ll take you home.”

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Hannibal ends up taking Will home much later than originally plans. Will finds every excuse he can to delay being taken home. And Hannibal falls for each one. It nearly confirms his suspects of neglect and abuse. Will asks for something else to eat, and then he offers to help Hannibal make dinner and help clean up afterwards. He helps Hannibal place portions in containers for Will to take home. It's nearly ten p.m, and Will simply does not wish to leave his car.

"Darling boy, you can't stay with me any longer. You must go home."

"I know," Will murmurs, picking up his backpack, heavy with glass dishes full of food. "Thank you again for, ah, making sure I didn't die."

"You're very welcome, Will." Hannibal slides out with Will, going around to his trunk to get out the boy's rinky dink ten speed bike. Hannibal just might buy him a better bike while he's out tomorrow. He walks with Will, pushing his bike along. "Goodnight."

Hannibal muses those soft curls on the boy's head before he turns head to his car. He watched through the passenger window as Will drops his bike near the porch and heads inside slowly. The drive back to his home is short, but for someone on a bike in the middle of summer, it would have seemed like a long journey. He thinks of thinks he can get for Will for a quick morning snack if he's not up and moving when he drops his paper off. Will suggested safe foods for kids. He could work with that. Right?

Wrong.

It turns out safe foods were processed, unhealthy, and overall bad for the body. He looks at the bag of dinosaur shaped chicken nuggets with a rather disgusted look. He reads the ingredients and puts the bag back. He can probably make the boy a better alternative. He checks the vegan option and pointedly decides that yes, he will figure out how to make these nuggets for Will. He buys peanut butter and apple jelly, as Will had requested, eggs. He buys a variety pack of Gatorade and a few other things for himself.

The week drags by terribly slow. He spends most of Saturday figuring out how to make Will's nuggets. He deems himself successful when they hold their shape. He puts them in a freezer bag and sticks them in the freezer. Hannibal cleans up his mess and takes a seat in his living room with a glass of whiskey in hand. The amount of trouble he went through for this boy, he hopes he comes right in tomorrow and rummage through his fridge and pantry for food. After his usual nightcap, he gets ready for bed. He is curious to see what tomorrow will hold.

Chapter 2

Will stands in front of the large front door to Hannibal's home. He is hot, sweaty, he's dehydrated, but not like he was last week. He's dropped all of his papers off, Hannibal's in his hand. He's uneasy as he twists the handle, surprised as the door swings open. Hannibal actually left the door unlocked for him. He smells coffee brewing, which means Hannibal is awake. He closes the door behind him and follows the smell to the kitchen. He drops his backpack near the entryway. Hannibal looks up from his mug, smiles softly at him.

"Good morning, Will," he says, sitting his mug down on the counter. "How are you feeling?"

Will blushes, turns his head down underneath Hannibal's intense gaze. "I'm fine," he says softly. His stomach growls. "I am hungry.."

"Well, you're just in time."

Will goes to the fridge behind Hannibal after dropping his Sunday paper beside him on the island. He had been serious about making sure Will had what he needed to recover. He takes out a blue Gatorade, sitting down in a chair at the island. Hannibal tends to something on the stove— *smells like bacon* . He watches him curiously as he takes down two plates, puts whatever he made on a plate and hands it over to Will. Will pokes at it, sniffs it curiously.

"What is it?" Will asks.

"Egg bites," Hannibal says simply. "Contains bacon, spinach and finely diced zucchini."

"Sounds healthy." Will pops one in his mouth. It's fucking delicious, and he egearly scarfs his second and third.

Hannibal chuckled as he takes his time to enjoy his breakfast. "Did you taste it, dear boy?" he asks.

"Briefly, and it tasted fucking good." He sips his Gatorade. He's cooled down immensely since stepping into Hannibal's home.

Hannibal's looking over him, as if debating something, or looking for something in particular. Will tries to make himself seem as small as possible, as if that would help him hide from this man's piercing eyes. He squirms a bit in his chair, picking up his plate to rinse it. Hannibal turns to watch him as he moves. Will feels a hand on the back of his neck, flinches instinctively.

"What happened here?" he asks, tracing along a bruise Will just couldn't get rid of.

"Er, my friends and I get a little too rough when we wrestle sometimes."

"Is that so?"

Will nods. “Boys being boys, y’know?”

Hannibal looks like he doesn’t believe it for a second, but he lets it go, opting to let Will take the egg bites right out of the pan, which he happily eats, taking his time to enjoy the savory taste.

“So these safe foods you suggested,” Hannibal starts, turning away to dig around his freezer. “Instead of buying those chicken nuggets, I made some.”

“You made me chicken nuggets?”

Hannibal hides his smile behind his coffee mug. “Yes.”

Will rolls his eyes. “You’re not one of those health nuts, are you, Dr. Lecter?”

Hannibal shrugs. “I am a bit particular about what I put in my body.”

Will takes the bag and opens it. He sniffs at it, shrugs. “Smells just like the store bought ones. Looks like ‘em too. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

Will decides to help Hannibal clean up. He washes the dishes while Hannibal puts them up. They fall into easy conversation. Will’s comfortable. He infodumps about fishing, different types of lures and fish that were popular in different regions. Hannibal listens intently, even asks questions. Will is absolutely thrilled that Hannibal is engaging with him. Will talks and talks and talks until the kitchen is cleaned. Now, he’s perched on the island as Hannibal makes him a cup of tea. While his tea steeps, Hannibal pours himself another cup of coffee.

Will just so happens to glance at clock on the stove. He blinks. *Hours* have passed since his arrival. He looks at Hannibal, who tilts his head, amused.

“What is it, Will?” he asks.

“I’ve been sitting here for three hours rambling on about fish. Why didn’t you stop me?” he asks bluntly, sipping his tea now that it is done.

Hannibal brings the tall chair around to the other side and sits. “You were very excited to talk about something you like, and I was very intrigued by your knowledge of fishing.”

Will flushes and looks away. “Yeah, sure you were. No one is ever interested. Truly.”

Hannibal drums on the counter beside him. Will studies the man, watches the tendons move smoothly underneath his skin. Without much thought about it, he reaches out, traces along the veins on the top of his hand, pushing up the sleeve of his robe to continue down to his elbow and back. Hannibal turns his arm over, flexes, and Will mindlessly traces veins from his wrist down to the bend of his arm.

“What do you want to be when you graduate?” Hannibal asks.

“Something in criminology,” he answers. “A profiler, maybe. I tend to read people.”

“What do you read from me?” Hannibal uncurls his hand, turns his arm around to, in turn, trace old scars Will has long since forgotten how he got.

Hannibal’s fingers are gentle on his skin. Will takes in Hannibal’s seemingly docile demeanor, but there’s an edge to him. It’s bristling blood red. Will doesn’t know if his red edges are dangerous for him, but he does know two things:

“You care deeply, and you’re protective of what’s yours.” He looks directly into Hannibal’s eyes, an action he doesn’t do often. “Am I right?”

Hannibal inhales deeply, pulls his hand away to sit up straight in his chair. The corner of his mouth twitches up into a small smile. “Remarkable boy, you are, Will. You will make an excellent profiler one day.”

The praise sinks through Will’s body, absorbs into his bones. It feels so nice to be acknowledged, to be seen. Will slides off the counter. “Thank you, Dr. Lecter. For listening to my pointless rambling, thank you for breakfast, for the sports drink, for making me chicken nuggets. You didn’t have to do any of that for me.”

“You don’t have to keep thanking me for these things, Will. I did it because I wanted to. I wanted to make sure you had sufficient snacks and drinks so you didn’t ends up passing out again. They’re necessities.”

Will looks down at his shoes. This has to be a dream. No way is there someone who is actually looking after him. His dad must have shook him a little too hard last night. He doesn’t know what to do, so he stands there awkwardly. His bag. A distraction. He walks over to it.

“May I have a ride home, please?” he asks.

“Certainly. Allow me to dress for the day, and we shall be on our way.”

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Will most certainly is not expecting Hannibal to look like a fucking model underneath his silk robe. He’s wearing khaki shorts and a plain white v-neck. It hugs around his biceps, clings to his chest.

Oh, what the hell? Will thinks as they head out the door. Hannibal lifts his bike into the trunk of his Bentley. He watches his back muscles move underneath his shirt.

“Come along, Will. I have my own errands to run today as well. I won’t wait for you all day,” Hannibal calls from the driver's side.

Will shakes his head and jogs over to the car to slide in. “What do you have to do today?” Will asks, tilting his head.

“I’ve to pick up a new suit as well as be refitted for a few new ones. I have a gala to attend later this evening.” Hannibal glances over at Will, eyebrow raised. “Why do you ask?”

Will fidgets in his seat, tracing the stitching along the seat. “I was wondering…if I could go with you?”

“You’ll be very bored. I’m not sure you would want to sit around while I’m being fitted.”

Will shrugs. If he’s honest, he doesn’t care. Anywhere Is better than the small one story disaster of a house he shares with his deadbeat father. He’s hoping if he stays out late enough, his father would be passed out and he can just…slip away for his room and be left the hell alone.

“I’ll behave, I promise.”

Hannibal sighs softly. “Alright. If you promise to be a good boy for me, you may stay.” Will blushes lightly, picks at a small hole in his shorts. Hannibal reaches out to grab Will’s jaw, forces him to look in his eyes. ”Promise me you’ll be a good boy, Will.”

Will can’t jerk his head away. He feels his cheeks grow redder underneath the doctor’s observant eyes. He shifts in his seat. “I promise to be a good boy.”

Hannibal is happy with that answer. “Perfect. Take your bike out and set it near the house. Quickly now.”

Will hurriedly gets out to do as he’s told. He leans the bike against the house. He slides back into the car. Hannibal reaches over and muses his hair before they’re on their way. Soft orchestra music plays over the speakers. It’s soothing and runs like background music in Will’s head. He watches out the window, blue eyes chasing each house they pass by. He zones out, dips into that void that is his mind.

He’s an idiot. He should have simply taken his drink and left. This man is a stranger. He can hurt him just as bad, if not worse, than his father. When he analyzed him, he *did* sense something dark about the man, something evil that lies within.

But Hannibal is nice to Will. He made sure he was okay, took excellent care of him while he was debilitated. He allowed Will to take most of the dinner the two of them made home with him. He *listened* to his rambling and *enjoyed* it. Hannibal has given him the attention and time he has never realized he needs. *Remarkable boy* plays over and over in his head.

The shop is relatively small. Hannibal places a hand on the small of Will’s back. Will looks around. The walls are a dark grey, the shelves along the wall made from a light colored wood. Light fixtures curve over each section of shelves. Racks of suit jackets and vests are placed evenly through the sales floor. Copies of rare artwork fill the empty spaces on the walls. Will wanders through the wood framed entryway. The store is open, so Will wanders. He can easily see Hannibal from any given place.

He’s never worn a suit before—not that he has any occasion to wear one to, but that’s beside the point. He looks over all the crisp dress shirt, feels each of the fabric. A few he instantly

pulls his hand away from because *that feels fuckin' terrible! Who wears such rough fabric?!* He stops at a rack of silk vests. He wrinkles his nose. The shiny fabric wasn't something he was into.

Will's shocked with how many different colors there are to choose from. He's only ever seen the traditional black and navy. He finds himself gravitating to the greys. He likes the greys. They're neutral and there's options.

And Hannibal said he'd be bored.

Will wanders around the store until he's seen and touched everything. He makes his way back to Hannibal.

"Almost finished, Will, and then we'll be on our way," Hannibal says.

Will nods, takes a seat. The tailor looks back at Will, then to Hannibal.

"I've not known you to have a child, Dr. Lecter," says the tailor as he jots down a few notes.

Hannibal chuckled. "Yes, well it seems I've rescued a stray pup."

Will's cheeks burn. He turns away to look at the shirts on the wall behind him. Will stares at the shirts for twenty more minutes until he feels a large hand on his back.

"You're still red," Hannibal murmurs as he ushers Will out of the store. "Do you like that nickname, Will?"

Will pulls his shirt over his face once he gets in the car. Hannibal hangs his new suit on the handle in the back. Will peaks from underneath his shirt, sees Hannibal is smirking as he slides into the driver's seat.

"I'm going to take your silence as a 'yes'?"

" 'm not a dog…"

Hannibal outright laughs. Will huffs and crosses his arms.

"If you say so… *pup* ."

Will uncovers his face completely. He sits up a little straighter. "You know, pups require much attention…Not just food, water. Gotta train 'em, discipline 'em."

Hannibal is quiet for a moment. Will worries that he should have kept that to himself. He toys around with his seatbelt, looking out the window. Will contemplates how he could change the subject, to distract the man from his unfiltered words. Really, he wanted to keep it to himself.

Maybe he'll just stick his paper in the mailbox next Sunday and then carry on his way. He can feel the color return to his face, embarrassed he even made the mere suggestion. If anything he's hoping Hannibal was just old enough to let it fly over his head.

“Er, forget I said anything…”

“I won’t.” Will hates how honest Hannibal sounds. “I’ll ponder the idea. If you do me one thing.”

“Considering the fact that I said to forget about it? I probably won’t do it.”

“If that is what you like. But if you change your mind, I’d simply like to know why you don’t want to go home. The truth.”

“And if I lie?” Will prompts.

“You can’t deceive me, Will. I am a psychiatrist. I read people.”

Will sighs softly, but he doesn’t say anything. He ponders the idea himself. It seems like a very bad idea, getting involved in any way, shape, or form with someone older. Especially someone who deals with the mind. Is he aware of the dangers? Yes. Does he care? …Maybe. Will knows he’s a prime candidate to be groomed. His daddy hits him, neglects him. He doesn’t remember the last time he’s received a compliment before Hannibal.

“I’m aware of what grooming is,” he says, propping his elbow on the door and resting his head in his hand. He doesn’t look at Hannibal, but he could see his reflection in the window. “No matter how you look at it, it’s grooming.”

“Are you aware of the consequences?” Hannibal replies simply.

“Yes.” Will finally looks at Hannibal. “I could be fucked up worse than what I already am, and, unless you know how to defend yourself, you wouldn’t survive prison.”

They’re silent again. There’s something weighing heavy on them. Will’s not sure if it’s the weight of uncertainty, the weight of Will’s trauma, or Will’s need for praise and affection. They’ve finally made it to the grocery store after what feels like hours to Will. Hannibal parks further out. He doesn’t switch off, doesn’t get out. He simply waits. He might as well tell the truth. If Hannibal is people reader like he says, then he probably already knows.

“Mama left when I was six. Daddy never pays attention to me until he’s drunk. He grabs me by the neck, shakes me, yells at me, stresses me until I seize.”

Tears form and he quickly and furiously wipes his eyes. He doesn’t talk about it—he hates bringing it up. He stares out the window. He sees nothing. Panic builds within, because he’s going to have to go home eventually.

A heavy hand rests on his head, pulling him out of his thoughts. Fingers stroke his check, along his jaw. His chin is held gently between forefinger and thumb. He’s forced to look into hazel eyes, soft with sympathy.

“Darling boy, do not fret. I will care for you. I give you my word.” Hannibal wipes away a lone tear that falls. “My doors will always be open for you.”

“Thank you,” Will whispers.

Will is happy to sit in silence, to simply enjoy a touch that, for once, is gentle. After a few moments, Will collects himself, wiping his eyes and then his nose.

“I’m okay. I’m ready.”

Hannibal scratches Will’s scalp, and he melts at the feeling. “Let’s get started, then.”

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There's a lot more people than Will was expecting at this gala and he looks horribly out of place next to Hannibal. After the big shopping trip, and the groceries got put away, he and Hannibal had gone back out, found him a suit that more or less fit him. Hannibal promised to get him a tailored suit for the next event as he hems up the slacks and sleeves the best he could.

This might as well have been a red carpet event. Hannibal stands in front of Will. There are photographers everywhere, and he was no doubt protecting him from having his picture taken as much as he possible can.

"Are you ready, pup?" Hannibal asks, glancing back at him.

Will nods, tries to block out the sounds of the cameras clicking, the murmurs that, combines, overwhelmed his senses. He follows Hannibal down the aisle, glancing back as their car was driven away by the valet. Will holds on to the end of Hannibal's suit jacket as they weave between guests. The aisle, or rather, the massive driveway, lead up to the grand porch, made of what looked to be marble. It is so shiny that he could see his terrified reflection as they make their way up. This place is massive—it's like a palace for nobility. Its whitewashed brick exterior stand stall, lit by several outdoor lights on either side of the six large windows, three on either side of the large double door, painted black to stand out against the white exterior. Through the large windows, Will can see the main area and the people who crowd it. His grip tightens on Hannibal's jacket.

Hannibal rests a hand on his lower back, guiding him through the sea of people until there's a break in the center of the room. Will doesn't step away from Hannibal, instead, he steps closer, practically hanging off of him.

"There's a ton more people than I initially thought…" Will says softly.

Will has never been a 'people' person, and he feels overwhelmed by the large number. Hannibal now takes his hand, guides him away from the loud murmurs around him. The next room is not as big, not as full, not as loud. It gives Will a moment to process his surrounding.

"Don't worry. I will guide you. Trust that I will."

Will doesn't say anything, but Hannibal understands his silent agreement. He takes Will back to the main room, where Hannibal easily begins to converse with others. Will stands like a lost puppy at his side. He knows no one, his suit doesn't fit as well as the others, and he's too socially awkward to blend in. Hannibal keeps a hand on him, though, no matter who he speaks to, where they drifted off in the room. The heavy hand keeps him grounded.
He's to be seen, not heard, unless spoken to directly. Will remembers this, staying quiet by

his side. He looks around to see if there's anything of interest to him so that, just maybe, he finds something that entertains him.

"Will, would you hunt down two glass of champagne for me?"

It snaps Will out of his head. He turns bright blue eyes up to his handler, nods once. "Yes, Sir," he responds. He lets go of Hannibal, leaves the safe little bubble he has been in. Champagne isn't hard to find. He circles in front of one of the waiters and politely asks for two glasses. He's given a look as Will explains that it is indeed for two adults, but he lets him have two. Will carefully weaves in and out of the sea of people, back to his person.

Hannibal takes them from Will, hands one flute to who he had been talking to. "Good boy, thank you."

The praise feels nice, and Will relaxes just a bit, hooks a finger around Hannibal's belt loop. With Hannibal so close, he doesn't feel as though the room will drown him, but he worries. People glance at him, look him up and down as they pass. What are they thinking, with him hanging off of Hannibal like this? Do they know? Do they think he is his shy child? Should he be worried. Hannibal reaches back, gently squeezes his wrist with reassurance. Will closes his eyes, takes a deep breath.

*In that moment, he lets the pendulum in his mind swing, how for a while, it has time slow down while he perceives the events around him, the adults in the room have their own circles of socialites, a drink in hand as they catch up, some are talking getting themselves a new property, some are tuning into local gossip.

And he realised, then and there where he stood. No one was looking his way, no one minds him, no gossip or curious gazes. And if there was one gaze that was, it was one that matters, the only one that does. He breathes, and time is moving forward again.

He gently tugs on Hannibal's jacket sleeve, and he waits patiently for him to finish his sentence. Will's a little afraid he'll be in trouble for interrupting, but when he looks up, he's met with a gentle look and a slight head tilt.

"May I roam? Please?"

"No longer afraid of the crowd, pup?" Hannibal asks, amused.

"No, sir. No one is looking at me, no one notices me. I'm okay."

Hannibal nods off to the side. "Don't go too far."

Will twists his wrist out of Hannibal's hand, brushing his fingers along the palm of his hand lightly before leaves in search of something entertaining.

As he scanned the room, will gravitated to a space where he noticed something that would and should be a centerpiece and yet it blended in with everything well enough that it wasn't the spotlight of the room, a grand piano by the window.

Will went to it and slowly touched the lid, amazed at how well kept it is, not dusty, thus something of regular use. It has him wondering if.. if he could get away with playing.

He gets closer to the seat and settles down before scanning the room, even if it was wide, the piano hid him quite well, it wouldn't make him the center of attention. Carefully adjusting the seat and lifting the lid, he pressed a key and listened to the note before grinning it was also well tuned with how it softly rang through the room.

Biting his lower lip he proceeds to play simple notes before starting up a whole song that would be familiar enough albeit the complexity. He doesn't strike the keys with much force, plays softly to entertain himself mainly. He feels at ease. He's lost in his own world.

It's not until he plays the last chord that he realizes people have been listening. He's startled when suddenly a large crowd that had gathered around began to applaud. He looks up, and the first set of eyes he meets is Hannibal's lit up with unhidden pride as he claps along. Will flushes and looks away. He quiets the crowd by dipping back into his head, let's his fingers dance across the smooth keys as he plays something different, allows himself to play with more emotion, a little louder. He's vaguely aware that Hannibal has come to sit beside him. He plays harmony with him.

Will has never been happier to play with someone. He leans his head against Hannibal's arm as they play. After they finish, Will's curiosity is sated. They go back to mingling.

"Talented young boy you've brought with you."

"Yes. My boy is quite talented. Recently adopted, I've yet to know he could play piano."

Will becomes the topic of conversation, but none are negative. In fact, it is high praise that he receives. Hannibal pets him and Will is loving the positive attention.

It's 10:30pm when Will starts to yawn and lean in more to Hannibal. He's got school tomorrow, and his social meter is low. When Hannibal finally breaks away from his conversation, Will tugs on his jacket sleeve.

"Dr. Lecter, can we leave now?" he asks softly, looking up with his bright blue, tired eyes. He uses Hannibal's title to hopefully convey how serious his request is without making himself seem like a brat. "I have school tomorrow."

Hannibal glances at his watch, but it's obvious his decision had already been made. "Of course, Will. Change into your regular clothes in the car, yes? I'll take you home."

Will nods, Hannibal taking his wrist as he guides Will through the sea of people back to the entrance. Outside, they wait for Hannibal's Bentley to be brought around. Hannibal's hand slips down from his wrist, to hold his hand while they wait. Once inside the car and the doors lock, he relaxes. He releases a long, soft sigh of relief.

"You were a very good boy today," Hannibal praises as Will started to undress.

Will flushes as he strips. He feels Hannibal's eyes on him. "Creepy old man…" Will murmurs as he opens his dress shirt.

"You belong to me now, Will." The I can look if I wish was implied.

"Funny, I don't see your name anywhere," Will teases, but his little bit of brattiness was met with a heavy hand on his thigh. Will pulls his jeans on and waves his hand away. "You're supposed to be taking me home."

Hannibal chuckles and Will smiles. Despite feeling drained from, he had a nice time. Dressed in his normal clothes, he leans the seat back and informs Hannibal he's napping. He's in a light sleep, vaguely hearing the soft instrumentals playing in the background.

"You did extraordinarily well, Will," Hannibal murmurs. Will feels a hand on his head, thumb stroking his forehead. "I will invest in a good suit that properly fits you, and I do very much look forward to bringing you to the next social event."

The car comes to a stop some time later. Will hears the gearshift lock into place, but he doesn't want to move. Hannibal's got a hand on his thigh, and he feels content. Hannibal's seatbelt is unbuckled, the seat creaking as he shifts. Lips brush against his forehead. Hannibal whispers that he's home, but Will doesn't move. His handler sighs softly. The seat creaks, the door opens, closes. And then his door is opened, his seatbelt unbuckled, and he's lifted out of the car and put on his feet, forcing him to stand and open his eyes.

"Come, pup. Do you need help through your window?"

"…No, sir," Will murmurs sleepily.

Hannibal presses another kiss to his forehead. "Goodnight, darling boy. Have a good day at school tomorrow."

Hannibal guides him up to the house, and despite Will saying he doesn't need help, he lifts him up anyways. Will rolls onto his bed, turning on his light and waving at Hannibal before he closes his window and curtains. God, he's ready for bed.

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It's near midnight when Hannibal finally sits at his desk with his glass of wine. He works on a drawing he's been working on as he winds down from his day. Will has been good company to bring to the gala. He was pleasantly surprised that Will had such musical talent. It's nice to play with Will. Fun, even. As he draws, he recalls how his boy looked. Uneasy, but trusting. So often he was meet with brilliant blue eyes, nervous when people move into his space.

Will has captured everyone's attention tonight, amazed each and every person that had listened to him play, and they each praised Hannibal for his boy's talent. He is quite proud of Will. He tolerated the crowd much longer than he thought he would. He listened very well. A good boy, he is, and Hannibal will make sure to reward him properly. With what, he's not entirely sure yet. But he has a week to think about. For now, he sits his pencil down and makes his way upstairs to get ready for bed. He takes everything out of his pockets and puts

them in their respective places. He tilts his head when he notices a message on his screen from Will.

Goodnight.

Hannibal smiles. It has been a good night, indeed.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter wouldn’t have been possible without @lil_ravenstag!

Chapter 4

Months have gone by since Hannibal has taken Will under his wing. Only seeing his boy on Sundays, though, just isn't enough. He misses Will. It is only Friday. He still has two more days to go. He taps his pencil on his desk and glanced at his watch. His next patient should be there any minute now. On the corner of his desk is a small jewelry box, a gift for his boy when he sees him. He picks it up and toys with it, listening to its contents rattle as he flips it this way and that before he opens the box. He takes the lid of. Inside is a basic chain dog collar he picked up at the store. Will has eyed it each time they pass it when they go grocery shopping, and he feels as though Will has earned it. Hannibal has put the young pup through so much training. Smart thing, he is. Obedient (when he wants to be) and oh so clever. Proper posture, good manners. He's so proud of Will.

A smile appears across his face just thinking about Will. He can't wait to finally gift him with the collar, temporary for now, until Will earns a more permanent one. The door opens and his patients quietly walks in. Hannibal replaces the lid and sits the box down. He could wait, he could wait…

Hannibal is more annoyed during this session more than anything. His mind is elsewhere instead of where he needs to be. It's frustrating. What's more frustrating is when his cell phone vibrates in his pocket. He presses the powers button through his pants to silence it. A few minutes later, it vibrates again. This time he pulls it out. It's Will.

"I apologize, one moment, please." Hannibal steps away from his seat, answers on the fourth ring. "What is it, dear boy?"

On the other end, Will takes a deep breath. "Are…are you busy, Hannibal?"

Hannibal tilts his head. Will has referred to him as 'Sir' so often, he's forgotten how his name sounds from the boy's lips. "It depends on what you need."

Will sounds frustrated with his answer. "I need a definite answer. Are you busy?"

"Watch your tone, Will. I am busy. What is it that you need?"

"My dad forgot me, or chose not to pick me up, whatever, and I've been standing outside for three hours. I was going to ask if you could come get me so I didn't have to walk home, but you're busy so I'll walk."

Hannibal glances at the patient, who has sprawled across his chaise. "I'll be there shortly, pup. And when I arrive, we will have a conversion about your attitude . Understood?"

There's a pause. "Yes, Sir. Sorry, Sir."

Hannibal hangs up, walks back to his patient. "I'm sorry for the inconvenience, but it seems my boy's guardian has not picked him up from school and I must pick him up."

“Oh, no worries, Dr. Lector, I understand. Should I just reschedule?”

“If you would. My secretary will get you settled. Again, apologize for the inconvenience. Have a nice day.”

Hannibal is thankful for the excuse to leave. He picks the jewelry box up and heads out the door. Why did Will wait until now to call him? Did he make himself seem like he couldn’t be called immediately when needed? A question to ask Will when he picks him up. The school is nearly empt when he pulls around front. Will appears from underneath the overhang, walking with his hands in his pockets and his head down. Will quietly slides into the Bentley and puts his bag on the floor.

“I’m sorry for my attitude over the phone,” Will murmurs. “I was agitated and I took it out on you.”

Hannibal doesn’t respond immediately, simply studies the boy. He doesn’t look up, he doesn’t say anything more, just quietly waits for Hannibal to scold him.

“Is everything okay, Will?” Hannibal asks.

“I’m fine. I just want to go home.”

“I can bring you back to the office—“

“I said I want to go home.”

This is not like Will at all. What could have happened to him between Sunday and Friday? Hannibal answers his own question when he remembers exactly why Will spends so much time with him Sundays. An abusive father. A neglectful one. Hannibal reaches over to brush his curls out out of his face affectionately, but his hand is slapped away and his hood is pulled over his head. Alright. He’d have enough of this poor behavior.

“I’m taking you back to my office. Forget the conversation to be had in the car. This behavior is unacceptable and so unlike you, pup.”

He watches as Will winces and sinks more into his seat. Hannibal pulls away from the school. Will can sit there and sulk for the next twenty minutes. The drive is silent—Hannibal doesn’t bother turning the radio on as he usually does. When they arrive, Hannibal ushers Will out of the car and up to his office. Will stomps in and throws his bag off to the side. Hannibal frowns.

“Will—“

Will climbs the ladder to the library, disappears from sight. Hannibal sighs and sits Will’s bag by his desk. He’ll deal with him shortly. He straightens up things Will brushed against during his tantrum up before he opens his door and allows the next patient in. Will’s collar rattles in his pocket as he sits. It’s sound sits heavy on his mind. Could Will not be ready for such a commitment? His mind is once again drifting off. Out of the corner of his eye, he sees Will, leaning against a bookcase, knees to his chest. He looks up and his boy disappears between

the shelves again. It's like he wants to be close enough to see Hannibal, but he doesn't want Hannibal to see him. What is going on with his pup?

The hour drags on, and Hannibal politely shoos the patient out. He turns in the general direction he last seen his Will.

"Come down, pup," he says firmly. He snaps his fingers twice, a audible signal for Will to come and kneel. He gets no response. "Come down," he repeats a few minutes later.

"Fuck off."

"First of all, you don't swear at me—"

"Fuck. Off."

Hannibal frowns. Now he's annoyed with him. "What's gotten into you?"

Will pokes his head from around the bookshelf. "Wouldn't you like to know?"

"Down here. Now."

Will huffs, but he climbs down the ladder, stomps his way to Hannibal's desk and drops to his knees. Hannibal sits in his chair, and he nudges Will until he's facing him.

"Talk to me. What's going on?"

Will's silent and he looks away. Hannibal grabs his chin to force him to look up, but he yelps and jerks his head away. Hannibal reaches for his chin again with a more gentle touch. Will still winces, but allows Hannibal to turn his head. What he sees cause nothing but pure anger to course through his veins. His fingers twitch, and it's the only sign of anger Hannibal allows to be known.

Will's face is swollen with bruises of various sides and in different states of healing. His left eye is swollen shut, there were cuts along his cheeks. Both of his lips are busted, and his chin looks scraped.

"Did the children at school do this, Will? Or was it your father?" Hannibal asks. He won't forgive Will's behavior, but he will leave punishment for a later time. Will doesn't answer him again. "Darling, answer me. I am quite frustrated with you, but I am also concerned—"

"Don't be," Will spat back. "Just fucking get it over with and tell me what my punishment is so you can leave me alone."

Ah, so that's it, Hannibal thinks to himself. He wants to be punished for something. He reaches down to pick Will up and the pup hits at him, shouts for him to put him down. Hannibal hauls the flailing teen into his lap. He forces Will to lay his head on his shoulder. Will fights tooth and nail to get free until he breaks down. He sobs into his neck, small fingers gripping his shirt tightly. Hannibal strokes his fingers through his hair and lets him sob until he feels a bit better. He encourages him to let it all out.

Hannibal holds Will close. He shakes as he sobs. Slowly, after almost fifteen minute, the sobs fad into soft hiccups. Hannibal pets his soft, short curls. Will starts to calm, his stiff body relaxing in his lap.

“Good boy,” he murmurs softly. “Good boy. Tell Sir who did this to you.”

Will pressed his wet face into Hannibal’s neck. “The kids at school started it…”

“And who finished it?”

Will’s silence is all the answer needs. Every week, his father gets closer and closer to ending up dead. Not even worth the time to harvest. Hannibal rubs Will’s back soothingly.

Will hugs Hannibal. “I-I’m sorry, Sir.”

He sighs heavily. “I know you are, Will. I know you’re sorry. And that’s why I want you to go kneel by chaise, hands behind your head. Time out.”

Will sniffles but he does as he’s told. Hannibal sees that Will knows he’s going to be there for a while. He faces the open window, crosses his ankles and sits. His posture is straight, head up like he knows he should be. He praises Will for his cooperation and good posture.

“We’ll discuss this more when your Time Out is over, understood?”

Will nods. Hannibal’s regularly scheduled day continues. After an hour, Will’s allowed out of time out. He’s more at peace as he sits at Hannibal’s desk to do his homework. Two patients cancelled at the last minute, wrapping up work day faster. He gathers his things while Will finishes up and packs his school supplies away.

Will’s wary as he gets into the car. “Do I have to go home?” he asks Hannibal.

Hannibal wants to tell him ‘no’. He wants to tell him that he can stay with him for the weekend, but that’s not plausible. It’s one thing to be gone most of the day, it’s another to be gone the entire weekend. Hannibal doesn’t answer as he pulls away from the curb. He takes his time taking Will home, stops and gets him something to eat. He given a soft ‘thank you’.

Hannibal waits for Will to tell him what happened. The boy knows what he’s waiting for—he can see it in the ridged way he holds himself in his seat. He tucks his trash into his backpack. In front of Will’s rundown house, Hannibal parks the car. His pocket feels heavy with the weight of Will’s collar. Despite the boy’s behavior towards him today, Will has been a very good boy. He’s gotten quite familiar with his place within Hannibal’s home.

He takes the box out of his pocket, the rattling catching Will’s attention. Hannibal studies the small box for a moment before he decides to follow through and gift Will with his temporary collar.

“What’s that?” Will asked, unbuckling his seatbelt. He leans over and curiously—and carefully— bumps the box with his nose.

Hannibal chuckles softly at the puppy-like behavior. “This is something for you. You’ve proven yourself to a good and obedient pup.” Will’s face falls. “Even good pups have bad days, Will. One bad day doesn’t not affect several very good days.” He scratches behind Will’s ear. Will leans into his hand with a small smile.

Hannibal opens the box, pulls out the silver collar. Will’s eyes light up and shifts to kneel in his seat. Hannibal gently touches Will’s swollen cheek. “You’ve earned it, Will.”

Will ducks his head as Hannibal slips it over his head. The boy is practically vibrating with excitement as sits back in his seat to examine the tag. It’s a blue bone with ‘Pup’ on the front. On the back, it reads Hannibal’s information in case of an emergency. Will tucks it into his shirt, zips his coat up closer to his neck.

“Thank you, Sir. I really am sorry about my behavior today. I just…I got beat up just because. My dad was contacted and then I got hit again because he was interrupted. I was upset and left alone in my head too long while I waited to be picked up…”

Hannibal inhaled deeply. “You feel the weight of the collar, pup? It’s a reminder who you belong to, now, and who you can always trust to call and be there for you. It was supposed to be a Christmas gift, but I was impatient.”

Will leans over to Hannibal, and the man is shocked when he feels Will’s soft, plush pink lips brush against his in a shy kiss. “I really, really appreciate my collar, Sir.”

“You’re welcome, Will.” Hannibal runs his fingers over Will’s neck. “Put ice on your face to help the swelling, darling.”

Will nods as he pulls his hood over his head and gets out the car. Hannibal watches him walk away with a little more pep in his step than when he arrived. It makes Hannibal realize just how much showing genuine care for someone can do. He makes sure Will is in the house before he goes home. He couldn’t wait to spend proper time with him Sunday.

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Sunday rolls around and Hannibal waits for his battered boy in the kitchen. He’s got Will’s chicken (people) nuggets cooking in the oven. He’s got a glass of chocolate milk waiting as well as a Gatorade. It’s quiet as he sips his coffee. Just as the timer goes off, he hears the door close. Will comes shuffling in, sets Hannibal’s newspaper in the island before he drops his bag and runs around to Hannibal’s side and into his arms.

“Morning, Sir!” he says, all bubbly and happy. Good. As he should be.

Hannibal chuckles and pets Will’s head. “Good morning, Will. What has you so happy this morning.”

“It’s always a good morning when I come to you.”

Oh, how Hannibal’s heart soars. He’s always happy to see his pup. “I’ve got your break—“

“Fuck breakfast, I want cuddles.”

Hannibal lets the boy pull him up the stairs to his bedroom. Usually, he would insist on a shower, but he's got his mind made up. He's planning something, that much Hannibal is sure of. Will's collar clinks as he bounces up the stairs. It's entertaining to let Will pull him around and push him down on the bed, and watch as a nervousness flashes across his eyes. Hannibal tilts his head curiously.

Will wedges himself between Hannibal's legs. He tugs on the robe he's wearing. Hannibal shrugs it off, but then a tug came to his red sweater he is wearing. Hannibal understands the hint, but he wonders exactly where Will is going. Hannibal watches the pup sigh heavily and reach out for the hem of his sweater. Apparently he wasn't moving fast enough for whatever his boy wanted. Will strokes his fingers through Hannibal's chest hair. Will's fascinated with it.

"I thought you wanted cuddles," Hannibal laughs.

Will playfully sticks his tongue out before taking a step back. He tugs off his hoodie and shirt off. He kicks his shoes off at the front of the bed, then his socks, and then his jeans before he climbs into bed. "Come on, old man!"

"Who are you calling old?"

Hannibal rolls over and grabs Will by his thighs and pulls him further down into bed. Will squeaks and laughs. He pulls Will down until he can flop himself on top of his pup, effectively pinning him down while he presses a ridiculous amount of careful kisses all over his face. Will is giggling and playfully hitting and kicking him and trying to push him away, but he knows Will is perfectly happy and content getting attention from him. Hannibal props himself up on his elbows, looks down at his bruised pup with a soft smile.

Will looks up at him like he's the best thing he's ever seen. God, does it make him feel warm inside. Hannibal pulls the blanket over the two of them, tucks Will's head underneath his chin and drapes an arm around him. Will sighs softly, content. Hannibal closes his eyes, snuggles further under the blanket with Will. Will's once again playing with his chest fur. Curled up with his boy, it's soothing. Hannibal doesn't think much of it when Will's free hand wanders over his shoulders and arms, his back and down to his stomach. And then a little lower.

Ah.

Hannibal catches Will's wrist. "No, you don't."

"But--"

"No buts, Will. I'm sorry to ruin any grand plan you had in mind, but this is an absolute no until you're eighteen." Hannibal had morals. Very few, but they were there.

"But I don't want to wait, sir.." Hannibal pulls back to look down at Will. He tips his head up. Blues dart away. It seems Will already knows what he's about to say. And he does. He says it before Hannibal could open his mouth "It's not about what you want, pup, it's about what's best for you. Yeah, yeah, I know...I just...I want..."

Will rolls over and scoots himself away from Hannibal, but Hannibal doesn't let him get very far. He pulls the boy right back against him. Will fit nearly perfectly against him, close to being full body flushed against him. "Tell me what it is that you want, Will. Tell me."

Will plays with the pillowcases, pointedly ignoring what was said. Hannibal slides his hand from his hip around to his stomach and up to his chest. Will squirms in his arms but Hannibal keeps him still.

"I won't tell you a third time, pup. Tell me what you want," he says firmly in his ear. He feels the boy shudder against and his hand leave the pillowcases to rest on top of his hand.

"Sir…" he whines softly. "I want you to touch me. It's not satisfying when I do it. Please? Just once? I pinkie promise to be good and wait after. Please?"

Hannibal sighs softly, nosing the boy's head. How could he say no to that soft voice begging him. He shouldn't be giving in, but he will hold Will up to that promise.

"Alright, Will, but I want you to stay still, no rutting, no rocking. Still. And then once we get you cleaned up, proper cuddles, and cuddles only, yes?"

"Yes sir!"

Hannibal presses kisses along his neck. "Good boy." He feels Will relax against him.

Hannibal lets Will use his arm as a pillow as his free hand strokes over his neck, brushes his collar off to the side. Lightly he thumbs over Will's nipple, drinking in the way Will instinctively arches into the touch before he settles back where he's supposed to be. Hannibal tugs, watches as Will tries to stay put as he was told. He thumbs over tugs, and roll them between his thumb and forefinger, drawing out whimpers and moans from the boy.

"Have you not played with your nipples, Will?" Hannibal asks low in his ear.

"N-no, Sir. Hurts…but in a good way."

Hannibal chuckles softly, only leaving his nipples alone when they are pink and puffy. Will's vibrating in his arms, struggling to stay still like a good boy. He's doing well, and he rewards him by stroking lightly over his clothed cock, hard and wet from Hannibal toying with his nipples.

"Sir…" Will whines.

Hannibal thumbs over the he head, feels the wet spot there grow bigger. Will takes a shaky breath. Hannibal slips his hand into his boxers, palms him lightly.

"Reach into the drawer on your side. There's a bottle of lubricant there. Take it out."

Will does as he's told. Hannibal holds his hand out, and his clever boy pops the cap and squeezes a little too much into his hand, but he'll make it work. He takes him into hand, slowly spreads lube along his shaft. Will's a decent size for his age—average length but thick. He's heavy in his hand as he strokes him. Soft pants come from his boy. Hannibal's

having a little too much fun working him up right to the edge and the stopping before he could reach his release.

Hannibal has to shift himself away from Will, just enough to keep temptation away from his own cock. He knows if Will were to feel him half hard in his pajama pants, he's try to help and God as much as he wants to feel Will's smaller hands wrap around his cock, it's better to keep Will from feeling it. Hannibal praises Will for staying still. The praise goes straight to Will's cock, he can tell. It throbs and leaks even more in his hand.

Will reaches up, threads his fingers in Hannibal's hair. He pulls lightly on the greying strands. Warmth spreads through Hannibal's core, a possessiveness that he has to tamp down firmly. The boy doesn't know what he's doing to him, nor will he know for now. He tightens his hand around Will's cock, jerks him off with purpose. He feels WIll's toes curl against his leg, feels him panting and gasping. The hand in his hair tightens, and Hannibal can't help the growl that rumbles deep within his chest.

"Oh fuck oh fuck oh fuck! Sir, I-I-I—I can't stay still anymore!"

Will's sobbing as his back arches. Hannibal can feel Will fighting every burning fiber in his being not to move. There are small jerks into his hand, especially when he rubs underneath the head with his thumb. Will tries to warn Hannibal of his impending orgasm. His words are slurred together, growing higher in pitch with each, " 'm gonna cum!" He repeats it four times before he comes. Hannibal praises him as he strokes him through his orgasm. He milks the last drop before he pulls his hand away.

"Good boy," Hannibal murmurs, bringing his messy hand up to Will's lips. The boy licks his hand clean.

"Thank you, sir...Thank you so much." Will nuzzles into his hand.

Hannibal chuckles softly. "You're welcome, pup."

"I'm ready for those cuddles now."

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Updating after a long hiatus! I hope you guys like this chapter!

"Hey, you wanna go to the mall after school?" Alana asks, looping her arm through Will's as they make their way through the crowded hallway. Beverly joins them halfway towards the front of the school.

Will clicks his tongue. "Sounds cool. I just gotta ask," he says as he pulls out his phone. He taps open his messages to Hannibal, and he's halfway through his text when Alana tugs him to a stop in the front lobby.

"You never ask, you just usually tag along."

Will scratches the back of his head awkwardly. Alana and Beverly were the only two friends he has, and he has yet to bring up his current situation. He really needed to ask Hannibal if he could tell them about it.

Beverly lightly smacks the back of his head. "Spit it out, Graham. You look like you have something to say."

He frees his arm from Alana's and shifts from foot to foot. "I wanted to tell you for a while, but, um…I can't. It's really complicated and really, really weird."

"Well, we've got nothing but time," Alana says, crossing her arms. "Out with it, Will."

Will glances around. There's just too many people around. One word gets out to the wrong people and Hannibal would be put in prison, and Will would be forced to forever stay with his father until he's eighteen, and that is just something he absolutely does not want to do. His collar feels heavier for a moment. "I can't tell you right now, but if I do tell you, you have to swear on your life you will not tell absolutely *anyone* else. This is a secret you have to take to your graves."

Alana and Beverly give Will a concerned look. They're looking at him more as worried mothers than his best friends, which he doesn't blame them. He is being very vague. He raises his eyebrows, waiting for confirmation. The girls look at each other but they nod. Will offers his arm back to Alana and she takes it. When they walk out to the pick up area, Will notices Hannibal immediately. He's the first car in line. The window is down and them man is scanning the sea of teenagers, his brows furrowed in annoyance.

"Okay, wait right here."

Will jogs to the car and opens up the back door. “There you are,” Hannibal says calmly. “For a moment, I thought you had detention again and failed to notify me.”

“No, Sir, sorry, Sir,” he says as he throws his bag into the backseat. “I actually got caught up talking. I got invited out to the mall right now. Can I go?”

Hannibal peers out the window as Will opens the front door, bracing himself against the frame as he looks in. “No, you cannot. You have a suit fitting today, remember?”

Will groans and rests his head on his arm. “Oh, I completely forgot about the event this weekend! Okay. I also have a super very important question that requires you to make a decision for me.”

“Out with it, pup.”

“The people who invited me to the mall, they’re my best and only friends. I used to hang out with them all the time after school, and I just haven’t since this relationship began. I want them to come over, but I feel it would be necessary to tell them exactly what is going on. Is it okay if I invite them over next weekend and I tell them?” Will pulls on his fingers nervously, popping each knuckles as he waits for Hannibal’s response.

Hannibal doesn’t say anything immediately. He rubs under his nose, but he sighs. When he looks at Will, he can see that there is a level of trust he is hesitantly putting into Will. “Are you sure they can keep a secret, Will? A big one like this?”

“There’s a lot of things that they know about me that absolutely no one else knows about me. We’ve been really close for years.”

“Alright. That’s fine. We’ll discuss more about it later.”

Will perks up. If he were a dog, his tail would be wagging. “Thank you, Sir! I’ll be right back--I promise, two seconds!”

Hannibal waves him off with a shake of his head. Will runs back to Alana and Beverly, who still stand where Will has left them. Will can see the questions on their face, so Will placates them with finger to his lips. “I can’t go to the mall with y’all today because I have obligations, but! I will text you an address to meet me at and I will explain everything then. I have to go right now though. I have to get fitted for a new suit.”

“Graham, this is sketchy…” Beverly says, glancing back at the car.

“It is sketchy, but it’s okay. I promise.”

He quickly makes his way back to the car. The moment the door closes, Hannibal is pulling off. Hannibal doesn’t speak as he drives. The silence makes Will believe he has done something to displease his handler. He *did* take too long to come out of the school. He let himself be distracted, and he completely forgot about his fitting. He tugs his collar from out of his shirt. He brings it to his mouth, tongue curling around the chain, a habit he recently developed whenever he is anxious. Because that’s what this feeling curdling in his stomach

like milk left out in the heat. He's so worried Hannibal is upset with him for being late. He *is* particular about being on time.

Maybe his silence has nothing to do with being late leaving school. Maybe it's because Will so desperately wants to tell their secret to *someone* . He's happier with Hannibal, there's no doubt about it, but it is starting to feel like an overbearing weight on his shoulders. He shouldn't tell anyone. It's selfish to do so.

Will doesn't know how long he's been in his own head, wallowing in his own worry. A gentle, heavy hand rests on his thigh and squeezes just hard enough to sting and bring him back into reality. Hannibal reaches up to pull his collar from his mouth.

"Come now. I can practically smell you marinating in your anxiety. What's on your mind?" Hannibal asks.

Well. Now that Hannibal *asked* , it sounds so illogical. Will focuses on the passing buildings instead of responding, though he knows Hannibal *despises* when he doesn't express himself.

Hannibal snaps his fingers in front of his face. "Stay with me, pup. What's on your mind?" he asks again.

Will shrugs and grabs at the large hand in front of him. He turns it over this way and that, tracing over faint scars and the lines that curve around Hannibal's palm. Hannibal is nothing but patient with him. He lets Will play with his hand, and Will knows he will let him until he finds the courage to tell him what he is thinking. Will takes a big, shuddering breath.

"It's…I'm overthinking things is all. You didn't speak to me after we left the school, so I just assumed you were upset or disappointed with me," he finally says.

"I am neither upset nor disappointed in you, Will. Do you feel like I should be?" The car slows to a stop. Will glances up to see they have made it to the tailor's shop.

Will shrugs, looking back down at their hands. Hannibal turns his hand, curling long, thick fingers between the small spaces of Will's slender fingers. "Yeah."

"Why?"

Will's nose scrunches in annoyance. He hates being asked why he feels the way he does. He doesn't understand why he feels anything. Hannibal has taken it upon himself to psychoanalyze him and explain to Will what he feels and why. Why does he feel Hannibal should be disappointed or upset with him? Will thinks about the answer for a long while, long enough that Hannibal dismisses it by shaking his hand free and shooing him out the car.

But Will never stops thinking about his answer. He thinks about it as the tailor greets them and guides Will to a stool to stand on as he is measured. He feels the way he does because he's abused. Cut and dry, plain and simple. Everything he has done was wrong. He has never been good enough. There's conversation going on, but to Will, it sounds like muddled conversations, like the kind he hears in the cafeteria in the morning, where different conversations meld into muddled background noise. He's stuck in his head.

Why would Hannibal be upset with him? He remembers the time he breathed a little too hard, and his father went on a screaming rampage about how ungrateful Will is. He remembers how he didn't clean the dishes right or fast enough. He remembers the stinging the moment a leather belt hit the backs of his knees, and in response, his knees buckle slightly. The tailor stables him, speaks to him, but Will can't make out what is said. He sleeps too long. He talks too much; he doesn't say enough. He moves too loudly; he moves too quiet.

"Will? Will stay with me?" Hannibal's voice makes it through the cracks of his mind.

His mind is on a constant loop of things he's been punished for by his father. And then a recent memory floods in. Of how he snapped at Hannibal. His displeasure and frustration. The tone of his voice had been so familiar, but he sealed away how it made him feel.

"He's seizing. It's mild though."

Maybe it's his mind playing tricks on him, but Hannibal sounds annoyed. He is unaware of what his body is doing, but it must be something that impedes the measuring process. There's a brief moment of clarity, where all the sounds in the shop suddenly flood his ears, light that is much too bright blinds him, and he is suddenly overly aware of four hands holding him steady. He's overstimulated all of a sudden. His heart rate and breathing spike, and *oh no* . He can feel it coming, and he panics. He speaks for the first time since they've arrived at the tailor's shop.

"Lay me down, lay me down, lay me down!" It comes out slurred and he's *scared* .

Will seizes. He hates everything about it. He hates how he feels afterwards. He hates being so vulnerable.At least he has someone there with him, someone he trusts and someone who knows what to do. Most of the time, he's alone, and he hopes and prays that when he lays on his side, he stays there. When he comes out of it, it's quiet, save for the soft humming of electricity, heavy breathing (which he assumes to be his own), and a steady breath above him. He's slowly becoming aware of his surroundings. Hannibal has him on his side, trapped between his long legs to prevent him from rolling over.

"There you are, pup," Hannibal murmurs, petting his head gently.

Will doesn't feel too good. He tries to sit up and push away from Hannibal, but he's too weak. It's mostly stomach acid that comes up when he retches over Hannibal's leg. After the initial bout, he's dry-heaving until he's sobbing. He's exhausted by the time his sobs turn into little hiccups before he falls silent.

"Let's get you into the car, Will. Don't fall asleep here," Hannibal says so gently that Will almost misses it.

Mostly because he is already dozing off. His body aches in a familiar way that he hates. His head throbs, and it's almost impossible to move. He tries to for coherent words to express this, but thinking made his head hurt worse, but unfortunately, communication is something Hannibal has been pushing for, and he'll be damned if he disappoints his handler, even for something as meager as say *I can't move* .

“Can’t,” he mumbles. “No energy.”

Hannibal doesn’t say anything, but he gathers Will into his strong arms. With ease, Hannibal stands with him cradled close to his chest.

“Apologies,” Hannibal says. “I’m unsure what caused him to seize. If you would, give me a moment to put him in the car, and I will come back to clean this up.” Will is taken out to the car and is laid down in the back seat on his side. Hannibal pets him. “We’ll be on our way home shortly. Rest, now.”

Not like Will has much of a choice right now. He finally opens his eye, staring at the back of the driver’s seat as the door closes, and the front one opens. The car hum to life, the air is turned on, and the door shuts once again. He’s not awake for long, though. The soft hum of the engine, the white noise of the air conditioner blowing on high, and the gentle vibrations of the car lull him to sleep.

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Hannibal sighs softly as he cleans vomit off the tailor’s tiled floor. It’s an easy mess to clean; there’s no undigested food, though that concerns him. Maybe he should start sending Will home with snacks to take to school.

“I think I can tailor a suit for him, given the measurements I did get,” the tailor says, offering Hannibal a small trash bag to throw away used paper towels.

“I’m sure of it,” Hannibal mutters as he pushes himself off the floor. He hasn’t grown much since the last visit, though it’s just enough that his suit no longer fits him comfortably.”

“When do you need his suit finished?”

“By Sunday morning. Mid-afternoon at the latest.”

“Late notice, but I can do it.”

Hannibal smiles, though it doesn’t quite touch his eyes. He doesn’t know why the man needs to mention he’s requesting a tailored suit last minute--he *knows* this. He was invited last minute, and he’s never one to miss an event. It’s better for his reputation. His tailor is lucky. His comments would have ended with him in Will’s chicken nuggets, but the man’s work is stellar and he has yet to find a better tailor. He pays ahead with confidence that it will be done in time, and he leaves.

Before he slips into the car, he checks on Will. He opens the back door. Will is curled up on his side still, snoring. He hasn’t moved from how Hannibal laid him. He brushes curls from his face.

“What happened, dear boy?” Hannibal murmurs, stroking his thumb over his cheek gently. “What were you so worried about?”

He sighs softly. He’ll find out one way or another, whether Will likes it or not. There is nothing Will needs to hide from him, certainly nothing that would stress him to the point of a

seizure. The answer is not something he'll get at the moment, as there is no telling just how long the boy will sleep.

The drive home is quiet, giving Hannibal time to reflect. Will had grown quiet after he said he believed Hannibal should be upset with him. No doubt, it was a trauma related response. He can't help but feel just a bit upset. Not with Will, but with himself. He's he not shown the boy that he can trust him with anything and everything? With gentle poking and prodding he should be able to get the answer out of him as to what was going on in his sharp mind.

The sound of a phone vibrating catches his attention. His brows furrow and pats his pocket. It's not *his* phone. It must be Will's. It vibrates incessantly. As if he is receiving text after text or call after call. Hannibal's curious as to who is blowing up his phone. He pulls over to the nearest gas station. He doesn't usually check Will's phone unless he's asked him to, because he wanted the boy to have some sort of privacy, as it is important in order to gain trust. Carefully, he rolls Will onto his back, pats his pockets. In his right pocket is the new smartphone he recently bought for the boy. There's app notifications, but nothing that was any cause for concern. In his left pocket is the old flip phone Will had been using prior. There were four missed calls and eight text messages from his father. Hannibal sighs and settles the boy back on his side and straightens up in his seat. He scrolls through the messages.

Where are you boy?

Answer me

You cant read english today?

où es-tu?

Hannibal scrolls up through previous messages. Unfortunately, it seems he has to take Will back to the trailer park instead of home with him. It seems his father has noticed his absence. He tries to configure a response. Most of the conversation is in an odd dialect of French, an interesting fact that Hannibal did not know about. Another text message comes through.

If youre not home by the time i am so help me god will you will not be leaving for shit tomorrow

The phone rings again, and Hannibal sighs softly. He hates to have to wake the boy up, but it seems he has no choice in the matter. He slips out the car and opens the back door. He shakes Will gently. He groans softly but otherwise, he doesn't actually wake up. Hannibal loops his arms underneath Will's and pulls him out of the car and forces him to stand. Will's knees buckle briefly, but Hannibal keeps him from falling. After a few moments of standing, Will stretches and rubs his eyes. He blinks up and looks at Hannibal with the sweetest blue eyes he's ever seen. His heart melts at the sight and it makes it that much harder to return him home to his abusive father.

"Why'd you wake me up?" the boy whines.

Hannibal hands Will his flip phone. He frowns and take it, scrolling through it. His eyes widen, and Hannibal can tell he is definitely awake now.

“Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit!” he mumbles in a panic. His fingers press buttons harder than is really necessary before holding the device to his ear.

“I’m sorry, I missed your calls. I had a couple of seizures back to back. I’ll be home soon-- I’m getting an Uber as we speak,” Will says in rushed French.

Will paces around the car as he listens to his father’s yelling, wincing and holding the phone slightly away from his ear.

“Yes, sir, sorry, sir.”

Will snaps his phone shut and shoves it into his front pocket. “Kay, we gotta go. Like right now or Beau is gonna end me,” Will says as he circles around to the front passenger door.

“Beau?” Hannibal tilts his head. “And who might that be?” he asks as if he doesn’t already know the answer to his question.

It’s quite obvious who this Beau is, though Will has never mentioned him by name until now; this fact goes over Will’s head in his stressed state. “My dad,” he says. “It’s French. It means beautiful or handsome, but GiGi was a little off with that one…” There’s a pause for a moment as Will glances up at the rearview mirror and then the sides as Hannibal backs out of his parking space. “GiGi is my grandmother. It’s not short for anything.”

“I’m interested to hear more about your family, if you’re willing to tell?”

Will scoffs, picking up his smartphone to scroll through his social media. “Ain’t nothin’ I really wanna talk about…” he drawls, and it’s the first time Hannibal has heard any sort of accent come from the boy. “It’s all just one big ol’ sob story that ain’t worth a hill of beans to tell. You can keep pushing ‘til the cows come home, but I’m not getting into anything more about my background.”

Oh, but Hannibal has his ways. “Funny little sayings you have, pup. I don't think I've heard them before.” He reaches over to muse Will's curls.

Will huffs and brings Hannibal's hand down to his thigh, once again, tracing along the palm of his hand. “Sorry. I'm not from the east coast, obviously. Sometimes they just slip.”

Hannibal plans to dig a little more, but for now, he has to put that plan on a shelf for later. He's pulling into the driveway to Will's house. His car rocks more than he'd like as he makes his way down the short gravel driveway. He grimaces as he hits a particularly deep hole.

“Thank you, Sir,” Will says as he gets out.

“It's no problem at all, pup,” Hannibal says, glancing back at Will as he gets his backpack out the back.

“Really. Thank you for caring for me today. Hopefully I'll see you Sunday.”

Hannibal is about to speak when the roar of an engine behind him caught his attention. A lifted square body truck blocks him from backing out the driveway. Will closes the door, and

judging from his body language he's yelling at his father over the loud engine, motioning wildly for him to back up. Hannibal watches in the rearview mirror as Will opens the passenger door and climbs up but doesn't get in. Hannibal watches in horror as Will hangs tight to what he assumes is the handle inside as his father guns the truck in reverse. Will drops from the open door and jogs to the car. He knocks on the hood of the car, throwing back a thumbs up as he heads inside.

Hannibal backs out. As he does, he gets a glance of Will's father, and for a moment, he looks like an older, more rugged version of the boy. Hannibal doesn’t dwell too long on it as he heads home. Sunday couldn’t come soon enough. It hasn’t been long since Will has gotten out of his car and he already missed him. God, he’s getting soft.

Chapter 6

Will is so thankful for his little job as a delivery boy, even though newspapers are starting to go out of style. He's thankful because he has a reason to leave ass early in the morning without a second thought as to why Will is up and moving at five am. It was definitely not because Beau beat the shit out of him for his smart mouth the other day, and definitely not because he texted Hannibal a billion times to please wake up and do a drive by pick up. He closes the door behind him and locks it. He opens his phone and checks where Hannibal is. He's giddy as the image moves closer and closer to his location. He grabs his bike as he sees familiar headlights turn down the road. He meets Hannibal at the end of the driveway, throwing his back into the trunk and securing it close with the bungee cord kept in the corner of the trunk. He throws his backpack into the back seat and slides into the passenger seat and sighs a breath of relief.

"Good morning, Pup," Hannibal says, though he sounds just vaguely annoyed, which Will would not blame him if he was. He's been texting him nonstop since four. Luckily, he wasn't dying, or he'd be dead what with the speed Hannibal responded.

"Morning, Sir. I'm really sorry to bother you so early--I really, *really* needed to get out."

"Pray tell."

Will runs his fingers through his messy curls--well. Attempts to. His hair is greasy and tangled, his skin is sticky. He feels fucking disgusting, now that he's in a safe place and he can think about it.

"Can I tell you after I have a shower? I haven't left my room in two days and I am disgusting." He can see Hannibal's reflection in the window, illuminated by the light of the radio. He watches him glance over several times, as if trying to assess him in the dim light.

Will feels subconscious underneath the constant once over. He curls up in his seat and pulls the hood of his jacket over his head in an attempt to hide away. It's still very warm outside, and Will has a tendency of running very hot, so him wearing a hoodie and jeans is probably a dead give away what he is hiding.

Hannibal seems to be amendable, as he always is when it comes to Will and his needs. "Very well. Do you not want me to drop you off to collect your papers?"

"Nah. I think I'm not running my route today. I kinda not want to do it anymore. Like, ever. I only have to the stupid job so I have a reason to run away ass early Sunday mornings."

"You should at least give proper notice."

"I'm technically working illegally," Will snorts. "Besides, they wouldn't miss me. I am by no means the fastest delivery person. Everyone else is delivering by car or by one of those e-bikes while I'm all manual with a health condition. There are plenty of other people to take my route."

“I’m raising you better than that. Plus, it would look good later on in life, knowing that you properly resigned from your job instead of just not showing up without any notice.” Hannibal reaches over to tug back his hood. He’s about to muse his hair, but Will swats his hand away, not wanting him to feel the grossness that is his hair.

“It’s not worth it, I promise,” Will insists. “I would rather be able to get up on Sunday morning and be able to ride my bike straight to your house in order to get some actual sleep before school.”

Hannibal *tsk* s, but he doesn’t say anything more on the subject. Will leans his head against the window, wincing slightly, but the cool glass felt good against his sore head, easing the slight headache that was starting to make its appearance. He could feel the gentle vibrations from the engine, the feeling a gentle hum that was lulling him to sleep. He hasn’t slept since his most recent seizure, Beau made sure of it. He’s been far too sore to sleep, tossing and turning to try and alleviate pain enough to get maybe a few minutes of sleep, but to no avail. But he was also too scared to sleep. He wanted to be well aware of his father at all times, in case he remembers Will’s smart mouth and decides to teach him a lesson all over again. He’s safe, he thinks as his eyes start to drift close. He doesn’t need to worry. He can take a nap…

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Hannibal glances over every so often, watching as Will’s head begins to dip and his eyes begin to close. The sun starts to rise, casting a pinkish glow over his tired boy. It’s odd to see Will dressed in a hoodie and jeans. He’s almost always wearing a tank top and shorts, but the weather is starting to change. The days are starting off cooler, but even so, Will’s normal temperature is a few degrees higher than the average normal temperature. He wonders if he’s starting to get sick. He’ll have to check once he’s had his shower he so politely asked for.

When Hannibal pulls into the driveway, he gently shakes Will awake. “We’re home, pup. Come, now.” Will groans as he wakes, rubbing his eyes and yawning. Hannibal shoos him out of the car with the promise of making him breakfast and allowing him to have a small nap before they start their busy day. Will rolls himself out of the car, grabs his backpack, and shuffles up to the door. Hannibal shakes his head with a slightly amused smile as he get out, watching as Will bends towards the handle to unlock the door via the key on his collar instead of asking Hannibal for his car keys. Such a silly boy. Hannibal adores him.

He adores him so much that he wakes up much earlier than he would like in order to pick the boy up and bring him home with him.

He adores him so much that he takes his bike out of the trunk for him and wrap the bike lock around the bike rack he cemented in place in his front yard by his porch.

At least when he walks through the front door, Will has hung his backpack on its designated hook by the door and his stained and torn shoes are placed neatly on the small shoerack underneath. He even sees the streaks of dry mud on the floor showing that Will attempted to sweep it up. *Very good, pup,* Hannibal thinks as he retrieves the broom to do a better job of cleaning the dirt up. He makes his way to the kitchen to make a simple breakfast for Will. The boy is a rather picky eater in the morning, and prefers bland food in the morning, so he

has learned, and so he makes a small stack of pancakes. As he cooks, he listens to the water running, listens to Will's near quiet voice as he sings to himself as he showers.

Will comes downstairs, curls damp and sticking to his forehead, and he immediately gravitates to the island and sits, waits patiently for Hannibal to slide his breakfast towards him rather impatiently. He shakes his leg, blue eyes locked on each pancake Hannibal places on a plate with a pad of butter between them. Hannibal raises an eyebrow.

"Hungry, Will?" he asks.

Will's nose twitches in irritation, and his mouth parts to speak, but he says nothing, a wise choice because Hannibal can see the smart statement in his eyes. Instead he says, "Fucking starving, Sir."

Not quite the response he wanted, but he supposes it's better than the original. He slides the plate over along with syrup. "Language, Will. How many times are we going to go through this?"

Will shrugs, drowning his food in syrup. "I dunno. Until you stop pestering me about it?"

Hannibal's lip twitches downward in a frown. "Excuse me?"

Will takes a bite, poking at his breakfast. "You're excused. Sir." It's mumbled, and Hannibal just barely heard it, but there's something hidden in his quiet quip.

Hannibal stares at Will for a moment. A few options for punishment crosses his mind. He could interrupt his breakfast for a well deserved spanking and time in the corner, but Will doesn't get much food while with Beau and it could lead into an issue with food. He could wait, but if he waits until he is finished, Will could drag his breakfast out as long as he could, and Hannibal would rather deliver the punishment soon after his bad behavior. He taps his fingers on the counter, debates as he watches Will slowly take another bite. The boy catches on fast, he sees. Blue eyes watch him closely, bright blue eyes darting over every slight change in Hannibal's body language

Will is quite independent, and very capable of displaying the fact that he *is* a child that has grown up too fast.

But he is still a child, nonetheless. Hannibal will no longer tolerate his bad language and his quick tongue.

"I suggest you watch your tongue, pup," Hannibal says carefully. "This will be your final warning."

"Quite frankly," he says, southern drawl coming out, "I don't believe you."

Hannibal exhales sharply. He remembers the first time Will verbally lashed out him, albeit, more aggressively than now, but the concept is all the same. Last time, Will needed to cry and be comforted. This time, it seems he is searching for something. So instead of choosing immediate punishment, as he originally planned, he asks one simple, loaded question.

“What is it that you need from me, Will?”

Will’s face twitches up briefly with a mix of shock and confusion before his expression becomes blank, eyes unseeing as his poking slows to a stop. Hannibal circles around the counter to place his hand over Will’s much smaller one resting on the table. His movement startles the boy out of head. His reflexes are quick as he grabs Hannibal’s wrist in a vice grip.

“I will break your *fucking* hand. Do *not* touch me,” he snarls his warning.

Hannibal can feel Will’s rapid heartbeat through his fingertips. His nails dig into his wrist, and he only digs them in harder when Hannibal’s fingers twitch. The boy isn’t a flight risk, like Hannibal would expect, but a *fight* risk. His pupils are dilated, his breathing quick, body tense and on edge. He’s practically vibrating with pent up rage. It’s such a drastic change from the boy he picked up a mere hour ago.

He’s curious what would happen if he tries to pry his hand from Will’s. Will he actual fight, or is this just for show, an attempt to make himself big to ward away what he views as a potential threat. He calculates his decision, eyes darting over his boy’s small frame. His free hand twitches. He wraps his fingers around Will’s tiny wrist to pry it away.

Hannibal sorely underestimates Will’s reflexes and strength.

Will launches himself up, slamming the top of his head underneath Hannibal’s jaw with such force that it stuns him and takes a staggered step back. Faster than Hannibal can react, he finds himself being flipped onto the floor and pinned in a headscissor. Will’s small frame packs a surprising amount of power and strength. He doesn’t fight back, letting himself be choked until Will releases him. Or rather, *if* Will releases him, because his legs only tighten around his neck as he taps the floor. It’s only when Hannibal takes a ragged, barely there breath, does Will release him, scooting several feet away from Hannibal.

One thing Hannibal is certain of: Will can handle himself. No one will expect such a small boy to be capable of taking down an opponent much larger than himself. Hannibal certainly didn’t. He rolls onto his side, coughing and gasping for air. He moves to his knees to get up. The moment he gets to his feet, however, Will darts upstairs, and a door slams shut. Hannibal rolls his head around, groaning as he rubs his lower jaw. He’s still panting lightly as he looks towards the stairs. They’re not having a good start to their busy day. He rests his hands on his hips as he looks at the half eaten stack of pancakes on the island, the chair that’s been knocked over. Hopefully he can smooth things out before their event later tonight.

Will is an interesting dog, very reactive and aggressive, yet so scared. Hannibal must take a very cautions, very easy approach to his pup or else he may bite, run, or both.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Hope you're ready for some angst :)

Will runs into the first open door he sees and slams the door shut. He pants as he leans against the door, slides down until he's sitting. He leans his head back as he tries to take slower breaths to calm his racing heart. What's wrong with him? Why did he do that? Why did he lash out like that? The headache that had eased away during a his hot shower is starting to come back with a vengeance. Maybe it's from where Beau had hit him, maybe it's from where he headbutted Hannibal.

Hannibal .

I will break your fucking *hand.*

Will buries his head in his arms, as if trying to hide himself from his actions. That's what he's doing now. He's hiding, hiding the most vulnerable, broken part of him. His breathing doesn't slow, instead, it comes quick and shallow. How long can he hide here in this room? How long does he have until his handler gets a hold on him? What will happen when he does? He had seen every minute change in Hannibal's body language. He's *upset* with him, truly this time. His observant eyes have seen it. Over his heavy breathing, he hears the slow footsteps up the stairs. He panics. Hannibal knocks on the door.

"Will? Open the door for me."

The thought of opening the only barrier between his vulnerable self and his handler *terrifies* him. He shakes his head vigorously in his arms. "I can't!" he says. He lifts his head, looking into the dark room. It's huge, empty, nothing for him to hide behind if he were to let Hannibal, no furniture to be able to turn over to make it harder for Hannibal to catch him if Will decides to flee, nothing he can use to keep him just out of reach.

He knows he's overreacting, but the part of his brain tells him he's not.

"You can open the door, pup. Open it for Sir. Be the good boy I know you are."

Will's eyes begin to water. He's not a good boy. He's a volatile dog, and his owner should be wary. He never knows how he will react. Will he run, will he fight, will he lie down and take it? He's shaking, struggling to breathe properly. His breath comes in quick, harsh gasps, and they echo in the dark, empty room. The doorknob rattles.

"I can hear you breathing, Will. Calm down, or you'll work yourself into another seizure. I can't help you behind a locked door." Hannibal's voice is gentle.

It's a trap, Will's instincts tells him. When he was younger, Beau used to talk to him that way when he was like this, scared, panic, and on edge. He would coax him out of his room with promises of not being upset. Will would fall for it every time. He'd slowly ease the door open, only for it to be forcefully pushed open and he would be shaken like a ragdoll.

"I don't want your fucking help!" *Yes, I do. I don't want to be volatile any more. I want unconditional love.*

"Be my good boy, pup."

"I'm not good! I'm a bad dog!"

"There's no such thing as a bad dog, just terrible owners. You're a good pup, but you're scared." The doorknob rattles again.

Will eyes the window and the closed closet door. He can unlock the door and run. He's never jumped out of a two story window before, but he has out of moving vehicle. He could handle the impact--he knows how to fall to cause the least amount of injury. He finds himself moving towards the window. It creaks loudly as he shoves it up. He can also fake his escape. He's done that enough times, but Hannibal is much smarter than Beau. He kicks out the screen window.

"Will?" Hannibal says, and there is rising concern in his voice. The doorknobs twists more urgently, and then it stops suddenly.

There's a heavy thud against the door. Will holds his breath as he as he quickly makes his way to the closet, thanking every god that the door did not squeal as he closes it. He twists the knob to avoid the *click* it would make as the latch closes into place. There's another thud, and another, and then the sound of the door crashing into the wall as it is knocked down. Hannibal's usually quiet footsteps are loud as he stumbles through the door and runs towards the window.

"Shit, *shit* !"

Hannibal's unusually heavy footsteps leave the room and thud down the stairs. Will exhales sharply, lets out a shuddering sob. He's overemotional yet again in Hannibal's care, and it wears him out. This is the worst he's ever been, and he's content to hide there in the closet for the rest of the day. He hears Hannibal shout his name outside, the panicked evident as each time he shouts louder and louder.

Will curls up in the furthest corner away from the door, rocks and soothes himself as much as he could without making a sound. He doesn't know how long he's been hiding, but the moment he hears the front door close, his heartbeat rises. He hopes Hannibal had given up looking for him, considered him a lost cause, and then he could really jump out the window and run. But the hope doesn't stay long, because he hears his handler come back up the stairs, panting. Will holds his breath, listens to those footsteps come back into the room.

You've done it now, Will.

Hannibal paces in the room before he stops. Will hears nothing. Suddenly the closet door is flung open.

“There you are!”

“I’m sorry, I’m *sorry* !” Will cries as he makes himself as small as possible, protecting his vulnerable areas on instinct as Hannibal steps into the closet.

But instead of harsh, razor sharp words and even harsher blows, Hannibal picks him up like a toddler and holds him close to his chest. Fingers tangle into his the hair on the back of his head as he holds him close. With him held close to his chest, Hannibal collapses onto the floor.

“I was so worried about you, pup. Don’t *ever* do that to me again!”

Will’s crying uncontrollably now. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean it, I’m sorry!”

Hannibal’s arms are too tight around him, and the bruising on his torso hurts like hell, but it’s a pain that feels comforting, because it’s not caused by someone who doesn’t give a shit about him, but from someone who cares about him, someone who was scared he’d run away. Hannibal doesn’t let him ago until his cries turn into sobs, turn into ragged breathing, but now the embrace hurt too much to stand.

“You’re hurting me,” he gasps. “Please let me go.”

Hannibal’s hold immediately loosens but never leaves. “I’m sorry, pup. I didn’t mean to hurt--”

It’s like a lightbulb went off in Hannibal’s head, because now, Hannibal is carrying him to his bedroom, turning on every light in the room to make it as bright as possible. He sits on the bed, cradling Will in his lap. Will is pliant in his arms, weak from fighting, weak from lack of enough food, weak from his emotions wrecking his entire nervous system. Will’s hoodie and t-shirt and carefully taken off, and Will feels shame, tries to cover himself, but Hannibal doesn’t let him. Blotches of deep purple litter his torso, some in the shape of fists, some in the shape of objects that had been thrown at him. Will can’t make sense of the emotions on Hannibal’s face, but he knows one, knows it all too well.

Fury .

Hannibal doesn’t say anything. In fact, the silence is scarier than if he said he’d kill Beau. It’s as unnerving as it is thrilling. The only thing that dampers the thrill is the fact that there are still two things Will absolutely did not want at this moment: to talk about the beating he took after Hannibal dropped him off and the fact that Will still needs to be punished for his rotten behavior. He hadn’t yet looked Hannibal in his eyes, and so he finally does, slowly lifting his head.

He is mortified at the bruise swelling along and underneath his jaw. *He* did that. *He* hurt Hannibal, the one person who has never so much as lay a hand on him. He lifts shaking fingers to carefully touch it, trying to use his softest touch. Either he’s successful or Hannibal

is very good at hiding pain. He doesn't flinch, but the fury, doesn't quite subside--it's still there, but it's mostly shrouded by a tenderness Will feels he doesn't deserve.

"Bad dog," he mumbles, mostly to himself. "Bad dog, *vile* dog."

Hannibal takes both of Will's hands and holds them to his chest. "No," he whispers, leaning forward to brush his nose against Will's. "Scared dog. Scared dog can be rehabilitated into brave dog. You just have to learn to trust me. You're not a bad or vile dog, Will."

Will sniffles, pulling his hands from Hannibal's to wipe his dripping nose with his shirt. "I don't want to be scared anymore, Sir. Being scared makes me mean. I don't want to be mean towards you. I'm sorry I hurt you."

"I can take a hit, Will, but what I cannot take is you running away from me. I do not want you to be scared of me. And so I think it is time we have a very important conversation."

Will winces and looks away. He doesn't want to have any important conversations. If his two options were to pick either the conversation or his punishment, he'd pick the latter. It is the lesser of the two evils at the moment. Hannibal sighs heavily. It's not a sound of annoyance, but one of pity.

Hannibal maneuvers Will onto the bed. With a gentle touch, he nudges him down. His jeans and socks are taken off together and left in a heap on the floor along with his shirt and hoodie. The blankets are pulled back. Hannibal snaps and points, waits ever so patiently as Will crawls into bed. The blankets are draped up to his neck like he likes. Will curls up, watching Hannibal closely as he divests himself of his robe and shoes. T-shirt and pajama pants join his robe.

Will doesn't get to see Hannibal like this, always mentioning something about not tempting an eager pup or something like that--Will never pays it much mind because he's usually too busy rolling his eyes and saying his little rule of no skin to skin contact is stupid. Hannibal slips into bed behind him. An arm wraps around his waist, and it's worth the slight twinge of pain as he is pulled flush against his warm body.

Despite his bad behavior, Hannibal still indulges him with something he usually cannot have (for good reason, Will knows). Hannibal slips his other arm underneath Will's head, resting his hand against his chest and ensuring Will is held close and wrapped in his unyielding, unconditional love. He buries his face in Will's neck, his warm breath ghosting over his skin in even little puffs. One knee pushes between his thighs, and the embrace is like a weighted blanket, comforting and way too warm. He can only stand cuddling like this for a few minutes, but he decides comfort trumps overheating. Besides, Hannibal will regulate his body temperature when he gets too hot by peeling the blanket back past his shoulders when he is fast asleep. For now, he lay quietly, thinks for some time before he finally speaks.

"He shoved me to the ground after you left, and I unfortunately have his temper. And so I fought back." He swallows thickly. "I already dug my grave when I yelled at him when he pulled up, and I dug it deeper when I fought back. And so he said since I wanted to act like a man, I'd better fight like one. It was just one ass beating after another for any slight mistake. I called because I was scared the moment I finally closed my eyes, he'd storm in and beat me

again. The nap I took in the car was the first time I got any type of sleep in two days. I mouthed off at you because I was tired and cranky, and the moment you walked around the counter and I assumed you would do the same. *I* know you weren't going to hit me, but there's a part of my brain telling me you would. It always say you will, and it makes me afraid."

Hannibal's arm tightens around him briefly. "Afraid of what?"

"That you'll realize I'm not worth your gentle touch, your praise, your affection. That you'll grow tired of my defensive brattiness and that you'll see me how I see me."

Hannibal's fingers slide feather light up his chest, looping under his collar. "This right here is a symbol of my devotion to you, sweet boy. You only need to see yourself as mine. I will not grow tired of you. I will have you as you are, and I will put together every broken piece of you, one by one, stitch by stitch. You need not fear losing me. I've grown quite fond of you. I find myself missing you each and every day I return you home."

Will turns his head slightly. "You really miss me?"

Hannibal presses a soft kiss to his head. "Every second you're away from me."

Will wriggles impossibly closer to Hannibal. "Did you go look for me today?"

"Mhm. I ran the entire block in my robe. I looked in every bush, up every tree."

Will giggles, imagine what Hannibal must have looked like. Someone were to probably assume he was looking for a four legged pet rather than his underage submissive. "I bet you looked silly running around in your robe so early in the morning."

"I didn't care. I was more worried you were hurt. I thought you had really jumped out a two story window."

"I've never done it before, but it's something I'd probably do. I once jumped out of the moving truck and ran to Alana's house, so don't doubt me."

"Install heavy duty locks on the windows. Duly noted. Now, get some sleep, pup. Despite the rough start to the day, we still have things to do. We must still pick up your suit for the event tonight." Will groans but Hannibal shushes his complaint. "None of that. There will be plenty of food for you to try and keep yourself entertained. I'll even be generous and allow you roam as you please. After your stunning display of strength this morning, I have no doubt you will be fine."

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When Will wakes, he's half expecting to find himself starfished across Hannibal's king sized bed, alone while Hannibal properly starts his day, but instead, he finds himself still cocooned in Hannibal's arms, albeit now his face is buried in Hannibal's chest, their legs tangled together, and Hannibal still snoring. He tries to wriggle from the unyielding hold, but Hannibal's strong arms flex to keep him in place. He's breathing in his own hot air, and he

doesn't like it. He's able to turn his head slightly. He stretches the best he could, wriggling until he can turn around. The movement wakes his handler slowly from his deep sleep. A heavy hand runs up and down thigh and the small gap between them is closed when he's pulled flush against him. Will feels the calmest he's been in days, relaxed despite being uncomfortably hot.

"Good morning, pup," Hannibal rumbles.

Will shudders lightly from the deep, morning octave. "Morning, Sir."

He's finally released as Hannibal rolls onto his back, joints popping as he stretches. Will sits up. Hannibal's looking at him with gentlest expression. He straddles him, bracing his hands on Hannibal's chest. He plays lazily with his chest hair. He studies exposed skin, touching various scars and wondering how he got them. Will traces along prominent muscles, admiring. He's thrilled that Hannibal lets him feel him up as he reaches for his phone. He tsks as he taps away at the screen.

"It's nearly noon, pup. We need to get moving for the day."

Will sighs and plops down on top of his handler, causing him to drop his phone. Sure fingers comb through the tangles in his curls. "I don't want to get up. I'm content."

"Content as you may be, it is still time to get out of bed. Be my good boy."

Good , Will thinks as he rolls off of Hannibal and out of bed. He can be good. He can be docile and obedient. Will stretches once more, spine popping as it properly aligns and decompresses. He still hasn't forgotten what he's done, and he doubts Hannibal did either--he never forgets. And so now it's just a waiting game until his behavior is corrected. He slips his jeans on and tightens his belt. Socks are pulled on, then he tuts to the master bathroom to brush his teeth. As he does, stares at the bruising on his torso. The blotches are ugly, a product of his own inability to keep his mouth shut and his temper in check.

It's *definitely* not because his father is a controlling, abusive drunk.

It's *definitely* no one's fault but his own.

Will shakes his head. He needs to get out of that mindset.

He's not a bad dog; bad things just happen to him.

He needs a distraction. He needs to not think.

Will spits and rinses. He stands in the doorway, leaning against the doorframe while he watches Hannibal dress down for their errand. While he's not in one of his usual bespoke suits, he still looks dressed up. Business casual, Will thinks the style is called. He stands there for a moment until Hannibal notices him.

"What is it, pup?" he asks as he rolls up the sleeves of a crisp, blush pink button down.

Will bites his lower lip. He taps nervously on the wooden frame, swaying back and forth. He's nervous to ask for what he wants; it usually lands him in trouble, but Hannibal is a different person, a kinder one, at least when it comes to him. Hannibal is patient as he tucks his shirt into gray slacks. He's nearly finished getting dressed when Will finally decides to voice he want, a need, and something he would rather get over with sooner than later. "May…may I have my punishment..Sir?"

Hannibal looks over Will as he slips his belt through the loops. He looks down as he tightens and secures it. "You may." He snaps his fingers once and points down in front of him.

Will goes to Hannibal and drops down to his knees. He rolls his shoulders back and straightens his posture. He tilts his head up, just slightly.

"There's my proud boy," Hannibal murmurs. He makes slight changes, straightens his posture even more. "We're going to address that smart, filthy mouth of yours. No pup of mine will speak with such little eloquence." He disappears into the bathroom. There's the sound of the cabinet beneath the sink squeaking open, plastic rustling, and then the soft thud of the cabinet closing.

There's a brief moment of dread. He has a feeling he knows *exactly* what Hannibal was currently carrying in his hand. His sinking suspicion is confirmed when he sees the white box he is opening as he returns to stand in front of him. A brand new bar of soap is shaken into his hand.

"From here on, you will hold this bar of soap for one minute per smart comment and swear word I hear from you. Open."

Will looks at the bar of soap held in front of his mouth. Hannibal doesn't give Will much of a chance for hesitation, for he grabs Will's jaw and squeezes, prying his unwilling mouth open and pushes the bar inside.

"You have six minutes to sit there. Do not move, do not reach for the soap, and do not let it fall. I expect you to bite down just enough to keep it in place. I will be back to check on you."

Hannibal leaves the bedroom, and Will is left alone. The stairs creak as Hannibal heads downstairs. Six minutes. He can stay still for six minutes. Six minutes is enough time to begin to associate swear words and sarcastic, smartass responses with the horrible, bitter taste of the soap. He tries to hold his tongue away from the object that fills his mouth, but as the seconds tick on, he begins to drool and there is no escape from the bitter taste. It pools on his tongue regardless of his attempts to avoid it. It's an unpleasant experience for his senses and as the soap becomes wetter with drool, the soap becomes harder to hold on to, forcing him to bite harder on the offending object he is to hold firm and ensure it does not fall. He clenches his fists, ignoring his brain's orders to spit it out. With his head held high, it forces the suds to sit and pool before it eventually begins to drip down his chin onto his chest. Six minutes feels like hours, and his jaw begins to hurt from biting down on the bar. He's relieved when hears hears Hannibal return.

He's right where he left him, in the exact position he had left him in. Once in front of him, Hannibal's lip twitches upward in a slight smile.

“Good boy,” he praises. He kneels down to Will's level and takes his chin and hand. “There's my very good boy. You held the soap very well for me. Open.”

Will huffs a soft sigh of relief, opening his mouth and letting the soap go. It sticks to his teeth briefly before it falls onto Hannibal's wrist.

“Go rinse your mouth and finish getting ready. I will have a new plate of breakfast waiting for you downstairs.”

Will nods, presses up in Hannibal's hand as runs his fingers through his tangled hair. He goes to the bathroom and thoroughly rinses his mouth. He doesn't like that he can still taste soap, but it he does his.best to ignore it. He earned it. He finishes getting dressed. The smell of bacon permeates the entire space as he tugs his hoodie over his head. Before he goes down, though, he looks at himself in the mirror. His eyes are still a bit puffy and red from crying earlier that morning. Underneath are slightly bags, and he hates how much older and tired they make him look. To be fair, he *is* tired, Obnoxiously so. He would kill to have a few days of consistent sleep. Nothing he's going to get with Beau. He'll nap as much as he can before he has to return to his trailer home.

How he wished he didn't have to go back. He wants to stay with Hannibal, where uninterrupted sleep will be guaranteed and hot breakfast a promise in the morning. His stomach growls at the thought of breakfast. He thuds down the stairs and takes his place at the island.

“Thank you, Sir,” Will says as sizzling bacon and steaming scrambled eggs with cheese melting on top is slide towards him. He has so many things to thank him for. He wants to elaborate why he's thankful, but the words stick in his throat.

Hannibal places a fork on the plate, though he knows Will won't use it. “For what?”

Will flushes and hides his face by pulling his hood over his head. He uses his fingers to pick up his eggs to occupy his mouth.

“For what?” Hannibal repeats, and his tone implies he will not let it go. Will has a love/hate relationship with how Hannibal reads him.

He swallows and picks up one piece of crispy bacon. “For making me food. Twice. For fulfilling my need for skin to skin contact this morning, for not yelling at me during my meltdown, for my punishment.”

Hannibal smiles at him, reaches out to cup his cheek. He leans over the counter further to look him in his eyes underneath his hood. “You’re so very welcome, darling pup. If you can’t tell, I am very patient, and I will always be here for you, through your every up and down.”

Will’s pink cheeks darken and he pulls away from Hannibal’s hand. He pulls his drawstrings to further hide himself.

“Oh, no you don’t,” Hannibal chides, tugging the scrunched edge of his hood and pushes it off his head. “Don’t you go hiding from my praise and sincere words.”

“Stooop,” Will whines, swatting his hands away. He likes the praise way more than he is willing to admit.

“One day, you’ll openly accept my words of affirmation.”

“It’s not that I don’t accept them--Well, I don’t, but that’s beside the point. I…” He shifts in his chair. “I…You’ll…Ugh. Stop it. I’m trying to eat. You’re distracting me.”

Hannibal tuts. “How inconsiderate of me. We’ll come back to that at a later time, then.”

Will throws his hood back over his head. “I don’t like the sound of that…”

“In due time you will.”

“Can I say a smart comment and a bad word and not have my mouth washed with soap?”

Hannibal raises an eyebrow and begins to clean up. “I suppose, since you asked so nicely.”

“Can you, for the love of all things holy, shut the fuck up? Please? I’m still a bit overstimulated, and I really, *really* cannot handle another emotional wave.”

Hannibal turns his back to Will, and god is he thankful for it. He shoves bacon into his mouth. “It is my turn to thank you,” he says as he washes the dishes he used. “For telling me how you are feeling. I want us to be able to have an open line of communication.”

“Be careful what you wish for,” Will jokes with a mouthful of his breakfast.

“You can tell me anything and everything you want. I’ve seen and heard it all. Now. Hurry with your breakfast.”

Will checks the time on his phone. It’s only nearing one. Hannibal let him sleep in relatively late, which is odd, but still, “The doors don’t even open until seven. Picking up my suit isn’t gonna take but an hour, getting there, the fitting, and coming back. By that time it’ll be just past two. If we leave by six, we’ll be there just as the doors open, which gives three hours in between.”

Hannibal clicks his tongue. “Cunning boy, but your timeline only works if we leave in the next few minutes or so, and I would prefer to have plenty of time for you to fully mellow out before I thrust you into a room full of hundreds of strangers.”

Will shrugs. “Eh, fair enough. I’ll be done in, like, five minutes.”

Will shovels the rest of his breakfast down, getting up to rinse his plate. He shuffles to the front door to slip his shoes on. He waits patiently by the door. He picks up Hannibal’s keys hanging on the key rack beside his backpack, which reminds him. He digs in his bag for his medications, opens each bottle and dumps one each in his hand. He downs them dry. He particularly hates the taste of his pills, but he won’t take them with liquid to make them easier to swallow--he’s grown too used to taking them without, and he’s a creature of habit, and so he will never change how he takes them.

He's putting the bottles back when Hannibal walks to the door, pushing his wallet into his back pocket. "Do you need me to get you water to take those?"

"No, Sir. I just took them." He zips the pocket.

Hannibal looks at him with shock. "Dry?"

"Yeah? We've established that there are several things wrong with me. Just add it to the ever growing list."

Hannibal rolls his eyes and shoes Will out the door with a hand on his head. Will locks the door and runs to the car. He slip into the driver's seat and starts the car. He watches as Hannibal shakes his head with an amused smile. He opens the door, peaking inside.

"I believe you are in my seat."

"What, don't think I'm capable of getting us there in one piece?"

"You don't have a license. You can't drive."

Will tilts his head, revvs the engine playfully. "I *can* drive, real good, actually. I just can't drive *legally* ." But he climbs over the armrest and plops into the passenger seat where he belongs. He toes off his shoes and puts his feet on the dash. "There's this old truck I pass by on my way here. It's for sale, and I want it real bad. I asked the owner about it. It doesn't work worth a lick, don't even start up. She's in rough condition but with a little bit of patience, she could run."

Hannibal closes the door as he gets in. "Do you think you can get it working, hm?"

Will looks dreamily out the window. "Yeah…" he says, thinking about the old white 1987 Silverado. It's been neglected for years, sitting on the corner of a property and delivers to. "He only wants $200 for it, which is fair. Probably needs a fair amount of work. The tires have dry rotted from sitting, so I know for a fact it needs tires. That's a grand right there, and then whatever mysteries it hides. It'll cost as much as a new truck to fix, but I like square bodies better than these rounded ones."

"Why don't you point it out on the way."

"Yeah! I can do that. The owner is really nice. The title is clean, and it's never been in an accident. He's just too old now and can't drive."

Will sits up in his seat Hannibal heads down the road. It's out of the way, per say, but Hannibal doesn't seem to mind it. Will tells him to slow down after making a right turn off their route to the highway. And there it sits, it's white paint chipped and discolored. Hannibal surprises him by turning into the driveway.

"What are you doing?"

Hannibal shrugs. "Thought I might talk to the owner about it."

“Now?”

“Why not?”

Will practically vibrates with excitement. Once Hannibal parks, Will gets out. He’s friendly enough with the kind old man that he’s comfortable running up to the porch to knock on the door. Hannibal follows behind him a bit slower. Will knocks twice. About five minutes later, the door opens.

“Hi, Mr. H!”

The old man holds onto his can for dear life. Mr. H has lost most of his vision and a good bit of his hearing. He’s hunched over as he reaches out to pat Will.

“Oh, Will! Hello, son! I missed you this morning, and my paper!”

“Sorry, Mr. H. I had a rough morning and I didn’t run my papers.”

“What can I do for you, my boy?” Will guides him over to his rocking chair by the front door.

Will helps him sit, closing the front door. “I brought someone here who wants to talk to you about the Chevy in the front yard. Can I look at it? Please, sir?”

Mr. H chuckles and waves him off. Will runs to the truck. It’s inside is clean of trash and of anything that would be rather off putting to someone interested in buying it. He pops the hood and eagerly peers inside. He’s happy to tinker with it while Hannibal talks to the man. Many of the parts are rusted nearly all the way through. Belts have rotted and are on the verge of breaking. Yes, he thinks as he moves hoses and wires out of the way. He can definitely fix this. If Beau has taught him anything, it’s how to fix old cars. He loses tracks of time, taking note of visible things he sees need replaced. He zones back in when he hears footsteps.

“Oh, Will, look at your hands! They’re filthy!”

Will stands straight, looking down at his blackened hands. “Oops. Sorry, Sir.” He hides them behind his back sheepishly.

“Nevermind that, now. Nice gentleman. Kind enough to hold it for me until tomorrow when I can call a tow truck to pick it up.”

Will’s jaw dropped. “Shut up, you bought it for me?!”

Hannibal tossed him the keys. “She’s yours.”

Will waves his hands in an excited stim. He wants to hug Hannibal, but he thought he would frown upon being touched with such dirty hands. “Thank you, Sir! Thank you!”

“You’re very welcome, pup. Now. Go ask if you can wash your hands and we shall be on our way to pick up your suit.”

Will's giddy with excitement. He does as he is told, and he's allowed inside the small home to wash his hands. Before he leaves the porch, he helps Mr. H back inside and tells him he promises he will be deliver his paper next Sunday. Hannibal is waiting in the car. Will holds the keys to *his* truck as he gets in. Oh, he couldn't *wait* to get his hands dirty and take the truck apart.

"I can't thank you enough, Hannibal," Will says. "I'm gonna make her run like new. She's gonna take a whole lotta work. There's a lot of things I can see that's gonna need fixed, and there's no telling what else that I can't out right see that needs fixed."

He fiddles with the keys. Not to mention all the equipment and tools he needs. He wonders if he'd be able to borrow a family friend's little shop. He pulls out his flip phone and scrolls through his contacts. It's after noon, so he shouldn't be too drunk. Beau sure had a way of picking his friends, but unlike his father, the man didn't get angry when he was drunk, just unintelligable and usually passed out once he hit a certain point. He calls, leaning his seat back and putting his feet on the dash. The phone rings four times before it's picked up and a gruff, slurred *Yellow?* is said.

"Bubba? It's Will, I have a question for you. Are you coherent enough?"

Will likes Bubba, or Uncle Bubba, as he used to call him when he was younger.

"Will? Will? Do I know a Will?"

Will rolls his eyes. Bubba was not that far gone, and he knows exactly what nickname he's looking for, but Will will *not* repeat it in Hannibal's presence. It's embarrassing, so instead he says, "Beau's kid. C'mon, Uncle Bubba. Don't make me say it. I'm not five anymore."

Bubba grumbles on the other end and huffs. "Can't even entertain an old man anymore? Whatcha need, kid?"

"I was just gifted an old shitbox. I was wondering if you can have it towed to your place so I can use the barn to get it running again."

"Oh, did Beau finally get you a car?"

Will scoffs. "Like hell he did. When has he ever been so gracious to me?"

"Eh, point taken. When ya gonna have it dropped off so I know when I gotta be sober by?"

"Sometime tomorrow. I'll have it set up a little after the time you usually wake up."

"Sure. I'll have it on the lift ready for you. Come by anytime you like. Use whatever you need. Just bring me a case of beer and a carton of cigarettes as a little fee and you're set until it's runnin' again."

"Thanks, Bubba. Carry on with your drinkin'," he says before he snaps his phone closed. He grabs a small notebook that sits in the cupholder and pen, jots down Bubba's address as well as a note to schedule it shortly after noon. "Okay, so," he says, tossing the notebook on the dash. "Instead of having it towed to your house, tow it to the address in the notebook. A

family friend has a little shop in a barn and he'll let me use it. I just need to pick up a case of Busch Light and a carton of Pall Mall, and I'm good t' come over whenever I want to work on the truck."

"Is that all?"

"Mhm. It's not a hard request. I can get that pretty cheap at the gas station right before you hit town. I can get it about half the price."

"I can pick it up on--"

"No, you'll get charged full price. *I* can get it half off. My dad has been sending me to this gas station for years to pick up his beer and cigarettes. In fact, he's done it so much that the owner has basically given me a permanent discount."

Is it a good idea to tell his handler he has the ability to get alcohol and nicotine as an underage teenager? Probably not, but he trusts Hannibal enough to bitch at him. Beau's raised Will to do some questionable things growing up, and he may sneak a beer or three and bum a cigarette or four while Beau is sleeping. Hannibal doesn't comment on it, nor does he say anything for the rest of the drive. The silence isn't as awkward as Will thought it would be, and he's content to scroll through the Autozone app to look for parts. By the time they get to the tailor's shop, he's added about three grand worth of parts to his cart.

"Come along, pup."

Will sighs as he pushes his feet into his shoes and rolls out of the car, following closely behind Hannibal. They're greeted immediately and with a bit of coaxing from Hannibal, it's mere minutes before he standing in front of the tailor and Hannibal is his brand new suit. It fits tighter than any outfit he's ever worn, and it makes him uncomfortable. It accentuates his small waist and long legs. He's so used to wearing clothes that are nearly two sizes too big, he's actually a bit surprised to see that his shoulders are actually broad. Will fiddles with the cuffs underneath his jacket, tugging them down a little further so they're not bunched up near his elbows.

The suit itself is plain, a typical black with a surprisingly soft white shirt. The only source of color is a burgundy plaid pocket square. The Oxford dress shoes are going to take some time to break in and get used to. Hannibal muses over the suit with the tailor. Overall he is satisfied with the fit and Will is free to change back into his street clothes. Before he does so, though, he looks at himself in the mirror. He brushes his hair back out of his face, holding it back as he looks himself up and down. He's never looked so…refined befored. He's always looked like a rugged street rat. His shaggy curls don't quite fit the look, but maybe Hannibal could do something about it. He seems very good at working magic. He lets his curls go, taking a deep breath. This time he'll fit in with everyone else.

"Are you alright, Will?" Hannibal asks, putting a hand on his back to nudge him gently off the platform he was standing on.

"Yeah…I've just never…pictured myself looking like this. I don't quite look like I come from where I do. I don't look like white trailer trash anymore. It's…new."

“You look very handsome, pup. Go on, go change so we can get home.”

“Yes, Sir,” he says as he goes back into the dressing room to change. He’s careful as he pieces his suit back together on its hangers. After seeing himself in his new bespoke suit, his attitude changes about the event. He can’t wait to go.

Chapter 8

Hannibal hates seeing the bruises on his boy's chest. The deep purple marred tanned skin. Will's sighs softly as Hannibal buttons up his shirt, hiding away old and new scars.

"I can dress myself, y'know?" Will mumbles as a soft blush creeps up his neck.

"I have not a single doubt in my mind that you can. You're quite independent, but I would like you to learn that you can depend on me when you need help, and by what better way to do so than doing a task you are quite capable of doing yourself. Besides," he says as he attaches his shirt stays and making sure the crisp white dress shirt was smooth and wrinkle free. "You're my pretty little doll to dress up, aren't you pup?"

The blush darkens rapidly and tints all the way up to his ears. "Yes, Sir."

"Very good. And what are dolls good for?"

"They're to be seen and not heard."

"Unless?"

"Unless spoken to directly."

Hannibal smiles softly at Will. He tugs the black socks up and over his calves and attaches the sock garters. He will look no less than perfect standing beside him, ever observant blue eyes darting from left to right and taking in the entirety of his surroundings, of the people around him. Will places his hands on his shoulders for balance as he steps into his trousers. Hannibal quite likes how the suit fits Will. The design accentuates his build, showing off the broadness of his shoulders and tapers in to accentuate his narrow waist. He fastens his trousers and reaches for the belt he bought last minute. The trousers fit well enough that he doesn't necessarily need the belt, but he feels a suit is incomplete without it. He tightens it just a bit to accommodate the weight of two phones and a beat up camouflage wallet he refuses to let Hannibal replace for some reason or another. Next is the vest and tie. Will is almost fully put together.

"To the bathroom with you," he says, waving him off. "Lets do something about that hair of yours."

Will's curls are a wild, damp mess on top of his head. He can't go anywhere in his nice bespoke suit with a shaggy mop. Hannibal has in vested in a wide array of product to care for those gorgeous curls (none of which Will uses on his own). Hannibal puts in leave in conditioner, because he knows the boy didn't do it after his shower like he'd been told to do, followed by curling cream. He's learned through a bit of trial and error that a little goes a long way. He combs it all through with a wide tooth comb, bringing those bouncy curls back away from his gorgeous face. Musing his hair separates the curls and gives just enough volume. He toys around until he's satisfied with how Will's hair looked.

“There we go,” he says when he’s finished.

“Thank you, Sir,” Will says, looking himself over in the mirror.

“You’re welcome, pup. Quite *pretty* .”

Will flushes at the compliment. He avoids eye contact as he leaves the room. Hannibal chuckles softly. *Even prettier with that lovely blush* , he thinks and he pockets his phone and his wallet and follows behind with his suit jacket thrown over his shoulder. Will’s sitting on the couch, putting on his shoes. Hannibal slips into his well worn oxfords, earning a glare from Will. The boy has made it quite obvious he does not enjoy these new shoes, but that is simply because they are not broken in yet. Hannibal calls off the list of things needed, like phones and wallet as he shrugs his jacket on and picks up his keys. Will confirms he has his things, and then they’re off.

On the drive, Will does as he typically does on long car rides: he tucks his collar in his mouth, chews and sucks on the metal. It’s something he should break Will from doing, but it seems to provide him comfort, like giving a pacifier to quell a crying infant, but if it soothes him, and hurts no one, then Hannibal sees no problem. It’s better than Will chewing his nails off.

When they arrive, Will lets his collar drop from his lips and slips out, waiting like the good boy he is outside his door for Hannibal. He joins him at his side as the valet takes the Bentley to an adjacent parking lot. Hannibal tucks Will’s collar into his shirt and smooths out wrinkles in his jacket. There he takes lead, his pup falling into step just a heartbeat behind him. He turns Will loose, allowing him freedom to explore the wide expanse of marble flooring, stone pillars, and endless amount of food.

And yet, Will stays by his side like a loyal dog, holding his head up high with his chest out. It makes Hannibal smile. Will holds himself with the same confidence he has when he is kneeling in front of Hannibal, a pup proud to be with his owner. He’s quite obedient as stays quiet beside Hannibal as they float from person to person. Most of the guests speak French, and Will does well maintaining what Hannibal likes to call his ‘inside face’. He plays dumb as if he doesn’t understand the conversations going on around him. Hannibal settles within a group of men, their wives standing behind them with a glass of champagne quietly. Just like Will, they are mainly there to be seen, not heard.

The men he speaks with brag about their riches and schemes to become richer. Hannibal knows these men speak from their ass and not their heads, but he plays along. It is obvious Will can see through their idiocracy. The more the men talk, the further forward Will begins to lean, as if that would allow him to further understand how their grand plan will work on a real-world level. There’s a point where Will can no longer keep a stoic face, staring at each person as they add their opinion.

Hannibal turns slightly to his boy. “Will. Stand up straight, please. Your inside face is starting to show.”

Will straightens up immediately and recomposes himself. “Apologies, Sir.” He leans in and speaks just low enough for only Hannibal to hear in the loud ambiance of others talking in

the crowded room. “These people don’t know their ass from their head, Sir. It’s all a pyramid scheme.”

This makes Hannibal chuckle. Quite the cunning boy. “Play naive. It will make the night go by faster if you.”

Will huffs but he doesn’t respond. Hannibal resumes his conversation. He glances down every so often at Will, but those pretty blue eyes are blank, elsewhere in his head. That’s fine with Hannibal. He’s about ten minutes into the conversation about rising prices and ways to profit off the poor when one of three men snap in Will’s general direction.

“ *Why don’t you bring four glasses of champagne over? Make yourself useful rather than just stand there like an incompetent statue.”*

Will blinks and turns his head up towards Hannibal, tilting, waiting for Hannibal to ‘translate’ for him. Hannibal’s upper lip twitches in, unappreciative of Will was spoken to. Hannibal turns to Will. Will shares a brief annoyed look.

“Mr. Dubois would like you to bring us four glasses of champagne, please. You’re free to have one as well.”

Will bows politely towards. “Yes, sir.” He turns on his heels in search of drinks.

The conversation turns away from business, but to Hannibal’s ‘poor choice’ in company.

“You bring a boy who cannot understand French to a primarily French-speaking event? How annoying it is to have to wait for you to translate.”

Hannibal’s eyebrow twitches up just slightly. Little do they know that Will thinks of them fools, as does Hannibal, but he would never outright say that. He has a facade and a reputation to keep after all. *“Much like your poor wives, Will is to be seen, not heard. Not once have you spoken directly to him until now, and I assume that is a trend that will continue. My boy has many talents. It will do you well not to underestimate him.”*

Will returns with a tray of champagne, and he offers each of Hannibal’s…aquiantances their respectable glasses before giving Hannibal his. The last glass, Will takes for himself, tucking the tray underneath his arm. Before Will could raise the glass to his lips, Hannibal says, “We are not in the country.”

Will gives him a look, but he understands what he means. He is to sip, not gulp the entire thing down in one go. Will turns away briefly to take a first sip. He grimaces.

“I’ve never had champagne before,” he says, looking at the glass with disgust. “This is very dry. And very gross. I don’t want this.” He takes another sip, as if confirming his decision on not liking the drink. “Sir, I saw someone carrying wine. May I have that instead.”

Hannibal defies his own comment and drinks half of his glass, takes Will’s and pours it into his own. “It is an acquired taste. You may have a glass of wine instead.”

“Thank you, Sir. I saw a piano hidden away in a corner. I think I’ll do much like the first gala and entertain myself with that.”

Hannibal nods off to the side, dismissing him. “You’re free to go.”

Will bows to the group and slips into the crowd of people. Hannibal resumes his conversation, diverting it away from Will. Will has found something to keep him entertained, and probably many of the guests. He will find him later.

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Will returns the serving tray to its owner, takes a glass of wine from another, and sips, washing his mouth of the dry tasting alcohol many of the patrons preferred. He would personally prefer a whiskey, but he fears the open bar would not allow him to walk away with a glass, so he will deal with wine instead. He sets the glass on the grand piano as he sits. He lifts the lid, tests a few chords to see if its in tune. He’s content in his own little world, playing as soft as he can so as to not disturb any of the guests. He plays a few songs he likes that he can easily transpose in his head. He’s halfway through a song when a pretty blonde woman walks up to him, sitting her empty glass beside his.

“Excuse me,” she says politely. *“Do you take requests?”*

Will glances back in the direction of Hannibal. *“I may,”* he responds in his funny sounding French. *“So long as you don’t tell my father I’m speaking French when I’m not supposed to.”*

“I speak English too. I noticed you were playing those pop songs I hear on the radio. You make them sound very good on piano.”

“Thank you.”

The woman makes a suggestion. An Adele song Will enjoys playing on piano. *Someone Like You* is a song he’s played before, and he doesn’t mind recalling the notes to the front of his head. He hums as his fingers dance across ivory keys. What he wasn’t expecting was the woman to belt out the lyrics. He wants to sing with her, but he remembers his one golden rule at these events, to be seen not heard. He can hear the loud murmur of the crowd start to die down. Too late to turn back now. He gradually plays louder. He focuses on the notes, even adjusts to play in the key the woman sings in. The woman smiles down at him. It’s as if she can sense his want to sing with her, and he encourages him by leaning on the piano, waves her hand at him. The look practically begs for him to join her.

And so he does on the chorus. He harmonizes with her, voice loud and strong despite not using it for several hours. He enjoys singing--well, he enjoys music. Dark brown eyes widen, and it’s a look he often gets when he does decide to sing out loud. He’s a warm tenor with the ability to cleanly sing soprano if he so chooses to. After the first chorus, he barely notices that the woman has stopped singing, but he’s too far in to stop.

He’s startled by the eruption of applause when he plays the last chord, nearly jumping out of his skin. Will flushes bright red red from his neck up to his ears. He turns around to face the crowd, and front and center stands Hannibal. He’s not clapping with the crowd, rather his

face is neutral. Will panics. Oh he's done it now. The men that he had been standing with whisper amongst themselves. Will abruptly turns back around, begins playing something more appropriate for the setting. Amongst the applause, he's all too aware of familiar shoes clicking on the marble floor. He adverts his eyes to the side as Hannibal sits beside him, taking over playing the treble parts of the song.

Will makes himself as small as possible. He's sure he knows what's coming. The woman is still standing beside the piano, smiling as she watches them play. He glances up at her, smiles apologetically as he jerks his head off to the side, silently asking her to leave. She does, and Will takes a deep breath. "I--I'm sorry, Sir."

"Silence. I told you you are to be seen, not heard, and no doubt the entire room has heard you." Will doesn't say anything. He's angry with himself, now, and he accents his notes more so than is necessary. "You disobeyed me, Will." Hannibal mimics Will's accents to make the piece more cohesive."

Will picks up speed as his anxiety grows. Hannibal easily matches pace.

"Nevertheless, your talent ceases to amaze me. Makes me wonder," he says casually. "Is this what you want, pup? Do you want to be heard? What do you have to say?"

They play the last chords in unison. All he's ever wanted was to be heard, to be able to shout his pain, to scream out his insecurities. His fingers move on their own accord, playing the aches and sorrows in his heart. A lament to himself that these party goes would never understand. The song he plays, it has no name. Chords ring out in the quiet room, sad and lonely, melancholy, consisting of low tones with few high notes, slow and quiet, a musical indication of his own heart. Hannibal listens intently to what he says, listens as he is the only one that understands. His own inability to remain an obedient pup hurts, and he stabs the keys as he chants via ominous, dark chords, *bad dog, volatile dog.*

" *Will's Lament,* " Hannibal hums. He presses a few keys, testing how they sound with Will's playing.

Will's stuck on a loop. *Bad dog, volatile dog. Bad dog. Bad.* Hannibal counteracts with bright, cheery chords. Hannibal hears him, sees him, and he lets him know that he is there, that he will always be there, despite everything. The light, airy chords tell Will that he is alright, that things will not always be dark and lonely. Will plays his dark past, but Hannibal plays his bright future. Gradually, Will relaxes, creeps into the tenor range.

"You cannot stay in the past, Will," Hannibal says. "Time does not move backwards. Only forward. You cannot move on until you accept your future. Your life is more than the sum of your mistakes, of things you could have done differently. You must accept that your past is just that. The past."

Will has a hard time accepting his words, and he hides back away in those dark, melancholy chords. He's a scared little boy, afraid of what his future may hold. He's riddled with so much self doubt, doubt of who he is as a person. He *is* a product of his own mistakes, of his trauma and self hatred.

“I love you, Will, for all that you are, and for all that will be. That will never change.”

It instills fear in Will's heart, to hear something so absolute. How can he be so sure of himself? How can he promise unconditional love like that? But somehow, Will believes it true, even if he is just fooling himself. He allows himself to be pulled from his battered and bruised, war like past, and to be brought into his new, bright and sunny future. Where Hannibal is there, waiting for him with his ever patient smile and outstretched hand.

Will drifts into the higher range and eventually, Hannibal stops playing. He ends his own lament on a high chord, dropping his hands into his lap. He is applauded and cheered, but they fall on deaf ears. He takes a deep breath. Tears well in his eyes, and he fights them back. He downs his still full glass of wine, stands and turns to the crowd, and he bows.

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Hannibal rests a large hand on the small of Will's back, guides him forward towards the crowd. Will is remains silent. His quiet cry echoes in his boy's ever expressive blue eyes, and Hannibal decides that he will no longer demand his silence. He falls back into his quiet demeanor.

“Wonderful playing, boy!” shouts out Mr. Dubois. *“Outstanding! Where did you learn to play like that? My daughter could stand to learn a few things from you!”*

Will looks up expectantly at Hannibal, waiting for the translation the boy did not need. Hannibal gives him a slight nod, giving silent permission. Will looks back at Mr. Dubois, shrugging halfheartedly. *“It's just one of many things I have picked up over the years. I learned from the choir teacher at school.”*

“Oh, so you do speak French.”

“French is my first language. It just sounds funny because of my Cajun influence.”

Will shifts from foot to foot, as if afraid he's spoken too much already. He distracts himself by looking at his watch. Hannibal does the same. It is already nearing eleven. The event isn’t scheduled to finish until one AM. He clicks his tongue as he decides whether or not to leave. He’ll make his dotantion the rather sketchy charity that he is sure is not going towards feeding those in needs, but instead wind up in the pockets of the charity holders. He reaches back to take Will’s hand, tugging him towards the main event starting. The charity holders sit at a table, and slips the prewritten check into the donation box.

“Leaving so early, Dr. Lecter?” he’s asked by one of the members.

Hannibal smiles politely. *“I must get my boy home so he can rest for school in the morning.”*

“So it’s your boy who plays so elegantly? What’s your name?” The question is directed towards Will. He hides behind Hannibal, poking his head from around Hannibal’s arm.

“My name is Will…” he says shyly.

“Speak up, boy, ” Hannibal scolds lightly. *“Let yourself be heard.”*

Will clears his throat, side steps around Hannibal just slightly. *"My name is Will, sir,"* he says, louder this time and very sure of himself.

The man nods and extends his hand. Will shakes it. *"Very nice to meet you, Will. You are most certainly welcomed to play at any of my events. Lovely playing, you do, and what a robust voice! A voice like that is meant to be heard. You have wonderful talent."*

Will's cheek, the blush that had finally faded away, returns with intensity. *"Thank you, sir. Really."* He returns to Will's shadow, signally to Hannibal that he is, in fact, quite ready for this social event to be over for him.

Hannibal takes pity and bids their goodbyes. Will sighs as they step into the moonlit evening. He can feel the relief Will radiates as they wait for the valet to bring the Bentley around. However, he does not speak again, even during the car ride home. He spends the drive fiddling with his nails in the dark. Once home, Hannibal has never seen his boy get out of the car so quickly. He doesn't wait. Instead he lets himself in with the key on his collar. Hannibal represses a sigh. He watches through the window as lights are turned on. By the time he gets inside, Will's nowhere in sight. His shoes sit by his sneakers, socks in a heap on top of them. Hannibal picks them up. He's about to head upstairs when he hears notes from his harpsicord. He stands in the doorway unnoticed, watching as Will delicately presses keys. Whatever it is that he is playing, it doesn't quite fit the unique sound of the harpsicord, but Will doesn't seem to care.

"Wish I had a whole room full of instruments…" Will sighs.

"That can be arranged," Hannibal says, tilting his head and crossing his arms.

Will jumps,a terrible arrangement of notes coming from the instrument as he jerks his hands back. He whips around with lightening speed, shouting out, "Jesus *fuck* !" He glares at Hannibal with a brief, mild look of annoyance. Hannibal decides to let that one slide. "Don't…don't sneak up on me like that. Please."

"My apologies." Hannibal shrugs out of his coat.

Will takes a deep breath. "I'm sorry. I should have asked first."

"No need to apologize, Will. You're free to anything in this house. You know this."

"Yeah, but this is expensive, and it's not just some toy to play as I please."

"I know you to be a very careful pup with things I give you, so I'm not too concerned about it. Besides." Hannibal flops down on the bench, slams down a few keys rather roughly. "It is mendable, and if anything, replaceable."

Will grimaces, pokes at the keys. He's quiet for a moment. "Would you really get me a bunch of instruments?" he asks, and there's a note of hopefulness hidden within the question.

Hannibal plays a few chords, humming softly as he nods. "Have I ever told you something I didn't mean?"

“No.”

“I’ll tell you what. Next Friday, if you are amendable to the idea, you can invite those girls along, and we’ll go to the furniture store. You can pick out whatever set you like, I’ll buy whatever instruments your little heart desires for, and you can have the spare room at the top of the stairs.”

Will lights up with excitement. He turns his entire body towards him, rests small, bony hands on his thigh as he leans forward. “Really?!”

“Really.”

“Can I paint it?”

“If you so choose to.”

“However I like?”

“However you like.”

“I really, really can have my own room?”

Hannibal chuckles softly, lightly butts his head against Will’s. “You really, really can. As much time as you spend in my home, you deserve your own space within it.”

Will aggressively butts Hannibal’s head in a way that a cat would aggressively thrust its love upon its owner. “ *Merci, merci!”*

“You’re welcome, pup.”

Will bounces excitedly. “You realize how much it’s gonna cost, though, right?”

“As you can see, I am quite well off. I have plenty to spend on things that will make you happy and comfortable within our home."

Our home. Yes. It feels quite right to say that, because Will has already made himself comfortable in his house, as if he lives there permanently. He flops on his furniture, leaves his dirty laundry around. He makes himself lunch in his kitchen, props his feet up on his coffee table. He wallows around in his bed, and announces the mutilation of his poor toilet with little courtesy.

Like a housepet with a case of the zoomies, Will excitedly dashes about the room and to the what will be his room. Hannibal shakes his head with a smile and follows the boy. He can’t help but laugh at the sight of Will rolling around on the floor in the empty room, despite him still being in his very expensive suit. He rolls onto his back and spreads out, look around as if seeing a vision, imagining what will be where.

“I feel like I’m gonna end up running your pockets dry. Between things for my new room, parts for the truck…”

“That is nothing for you to worry about.”

“I can put up soundproofing in that corner, the bed can go there. Maybe replace the carpet with a different color.”

Hannibal raised his eyebrow. “Who said anything about replacing the carpet? It’s practically brand new.”

Will rolls onto his stomach. “Grey is such a boring color though. I’m thinking a deep green--”

“I’m not paying anyone to tear up perfectly good carpet, Will.”

“You don’t have to. I can get it up and replace it myself.”

Hannibal rolls his eyes. “Of course you can.”

Will stands up. “Jack of all trades.” He motions to himself. “I’m also thinking about replacing the overhead light with a ceiling fan, or maybe a nicer looking light fixture. Dunno yet. I have until Friday to think about it.”

“Good grief, what did I just get myself into?”

“Another expensive project to keep me entertained?”

Hannibal shakes his head. As he looked around, Hannibal can see the dollar sign growing bigger and bigger. Maybe he should set a budget for Will, he thinks. “Remind me to limit you to only one project per two months next time. Go get your street clothes on before you get the zoomies again and ruin your suit. Go on. Get.”

Will grins and runs past him to Hannibal’s bedroom. He hears the closet door open and his garment bag unzip. God, Hannibal utterly loves his pup.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Just a friendly reminder that this fic is NSFW :3 There is light smut in this chapter.

Hannibal sits on the couch with his morning coffee. Like clockwork, he hears the sound of Will's bike thudding into the bike rack near the porch. Two minutes later, in walks a sweaty Will. Shoes thunk onto the floor.

“Good morning, Will,” Hannibal says as he picks up a plate of food, still steaming, handing it to the boy as he walks by the couch.

“Morning, Sir!” he calls out as he heads to the kitchen to sit in his usual chair at the island.

“I'm sorry I was unable to pick you up from school this week. I've been quite busy.”

“Mm, it's fine. Dad forgot me nearly every day this week, but Tuesday and Thursday didn't bother me too much. Bev has orchestra practice after school those days, and the director is okay with me staying there.”

“She's in ochestea?” Interesting.

“Yep! First chair violin. Oh! Sometimes, the director will let me join their practice too! I did Thursday.”

“That's good to hear, pup.” He hauls himself off the couch to make his way to the kitchen. Will has nearly demolished the large plate of food handed to him. He pours a glass of water and slides it to the boy. “Is there anything in particular you wanted to do today? My schedule is clear for the rest of the day.”

Will gulps down his water at an alarming rate. “Mm. I wanna work on my truck today. Wanna start gettin’ all the rusted parts out, see what I need to get.” He pulls out his phone, taps away at the screen before handing it to Hannibal.

Hannibal brings the device closer to his face. He's staring at a picture of what he assumes is an engine. Right below it, a description, but what catches his attention is the price. He sets the device down, looking at Will with a raised eyebrow.

“I want it, Sir.”

“That is nearly twelve grand.”

“Its a Cummings. Completely built. That's cheap. I saw a newer one someone was selling for twenty grand.”

“You're going to have to show me twelve grand worth of work.”

“But Sir!” Will whines.

Hannibal shuts him down quick. “What are your grades right now?” Hannibal asks, resting a hand on his hips. Will adverts his eyes and says nothing, but his lower lip juts out in a rather adorable pout. The silence is answer enough. “That's what I thought. This engine is a want, not a need. I want to see minimum B's across the board. Then we can talk about this engine. And quite frankly, your behavior is starting to slip, boy. You haven't been doing your chores. Look at me when I'm speaking to you, Will.”

Will's jaw set, head snapping forward to look Hannibal in his eyes. There's a defiant gleam in his eye. He looks as though he wants to throw a tantrum, but the boy is clever enough to know that it is not an action he should proceed with. This silent tantrum is of nothing but Hannibal's own doing. He's been too soft with Will, seemingly walking on eggshells to keep the boy from a mental breakdown. It's time he nipped it in the bud, and set clear rules.

“I suggest you drop the attitude.”

“I don't have an attitude. You said look at you and I did as I was told,” Will quipped back.

“Do not go down this road, Will,” he warned.

Will’s lips twitches upward. Hannibal can practically feel the challenge bubbling inside of Will, up to that sharp, quick witted tongue that barely contains unspoken words caught by his filter. There’s a glint in his eye, a playful one, though there’s still some upset by being told he couldn’t have something he wanted. His body had tensed slightly, but it relaxes as he says, “Yes, Sir. I’m sorry.”

Hannibal tilts his head as he watches Will eat, but those brilliant, ever observant eyes never looked away from him. “What are you planning, boy?” he asks, suspicious of the sudden change.

“I’m not plannin’ nothin’. Just remembered my place is all,” he drawls lazily.

“That engine isn’t the only thing you want, is it, pup?”

Will takes his empty plate to the sink and washes it along with the dirty dishes made from cooking his breakfast. “No, Sir. It’s not,” he says as he scrubs the pan. “It’s sort of a want and a need.” He sits the clean dishes in the dishrack to dry. He turns and leans against the counter, crossing his arms. “I initially intended to be a brat to get it, but I thought better.”

Hannibal’s curiosity piqued. “What is it that you need?”

Will waves him off, getting himself a sports drink from the fridge. He twists the top off and takes a long sip. He looks over Hannibal thoughtfully, idly playing with the cap in his hand.

He clicks his tongue and shakes his head, as if clearing some intrusive thought. “That’s a loaded question,” he says slowly. He taps his fingers on the bottle before taking another sip.

Hannibal can see Will starting to flush a light color of red. His chest rises and falls just a little quicker. Pupils dilate slightly. He circles around the island, approaching his boy, crowds his space as he gently grips onto his chin, dark eyes darting over Will’s face. He tilts his head up, studying those stunning blue eyes.

“What is it that you need, pup?” he asks again.

Will licks his lips and breaks eye contact by turning away from him. “Bad dog…” he mutters to himself. He shakes his head vigorously. “Bad dog.”

Ah, so that’s it, Hannibal thinks to himself. In the months that Hannibal has cared for Will, he’s learned to pick up on a few tell-tale signs of Will’s ever racing thoughts. He’s nearly seventeen now, and his body is finally starting to regulate itself, for the most part. Will is no longer living completely in survival mode, and honestly, Hannibal should have seen this coming.

Will’s hormones are all over the place, and can very clearly see that it is stressing the boy out. Hannibal presses against Will’s back, reaches around to wrap deft fingers around his throat. Will whines softly, reaching up with slightly shaking hands to grab Hannibal's. Very carefully, he squeezes the sides of his neck. Against his fingers, he can feel Will’s rapid heartbeat. His breath comes in short little puffs as Hannibal walks backwards until his lower back hits the island, pulling Will with him. Hannibal slips his free hand underneath Will’s sweat damp shirt, trails his fingers up and down from his collarbone down to the waistband of his jeans.

“No. Stop, please, Sir,” he whispers.

Hannibal squeezes his throat just a little tighter. Will’s mouth falls slack as a soft moan slips past his lips. He shushes him with a kiss on the top of his head. “Shh,” he murmurs, undoing Will’s belt.

“Wanna be good, Sir. Wanna be a good boy,” he whimpers.

“You are my very good boy, don’t worry.” He easily opens the button on his shorts and slides the zipper down. “Relax for me, pup. It’s alright, you’re alright. I promise.”

“But--but, you said--” Hannibal slips his hand into Will’s open shorts, palming the boy’s growing erection, and it quiets his argument. Will bites his lip to stifle another moan.

“I know what I said, but I promised to care for your needs. I know this is what you need right now. Let go for me. Be a good boy for me. Relax. I have you. I’ll take care of you.”

Will trembles as Hannibal finds the leaking head of his cock, rubs gentle circles over it. The fabric of his boxers dampen as he coaxes his boy to relax into him. Will lets his head fall back against his shoulder. Hannibal teases him through his boxers until he’s fully hard and rutting into his hand. Will brushes his damp curls from his face and reaches back to wrap his

arm around Hannibal's neck. He's told Will time and time again that he must wait until he's eighteen for Hannibal to touch him like this. He's breaking his own rule, but Hannibal can't help it. He promised he would meet Will's needs, and Will can't help himself either.

Hannibal isn't sure if this built up sexual frustration is because Will is denying himself or if it is because getting off himself isn't enough satisfaction. He never explicitly said Will couldn't touch himself. He felt like that would be cruel to withhold such a thing from a teenager whose hormones have yet to stabilize.

"Couch, please," Will pants. "I-I…don't think I'll be able to…hold myself up."

A chuckle rumbles from Hannibal's chest. Will's legs were already just barely holding him up as it is. He hooks his arms underneath Will's knees, easily picking him up and carrying him to the couch where he sits. Will presses himself closer against Hannibal, legs resting against the outside of Hannibal's. Hannibal forces Will's legs open wider as he frees the boy's throbbing cock from his boxers, the other hand coming up to cover his mouth.

"Spit," he commanded. Will obeys immediately, spitting into his hand. He darts his tongue out, spreading his saliva over the entirety of his palm, further wetting it. "Good boy. Again. Make sure my hand is nice and wet for me."

Will spits into his hand again. Hannibal takes his hand away from his mouth, palm very well coated. He wraps his wet hand around his cock, strokes him slowly. Will practically melts into him immediately. He rolls his hips up into his hand. The boy practically vibrates in his lap.

With his free hand, Hannibal pulls Will's shirt up and off, tossing it off to the side haphazardly. He reaches up and wraps his hand around Will's throat, this time squeezing tighter. He strokes his cock faster. The saliva is starting to dry but Will is leaking so much now there is still little friction. Will is fucking into his hand now, chasing that much needed orgasm with little rhythm, leaving Hannibal to adjust and match Will's frantic hips.

Hannibal is becoming more and more aware of his own erection, throbbing and soaking his thin pajama pants. He can ignore it, for the most part. He has more self control than the poor boy in his lap. At least, that is what he tells himself.

"That's it, that's my good boy," he murmurs in Will's ear.

"Ngh, oh God, Sir!" Will cries out, reaching back to grip Hannibal's hair tightly. His body slowly begins to tense and his toes curl against Hannibal's leg. "Please, can I cum?" he begs.

Hannibal roughly grabs Will's chin, forcing his head back. "Look at me," he growls. Blue eyes snap back to look at Hannibal. Blue eyes are locked on him, pupils fully dilated. "Tell me who owns you, pup."

"S-Sir owns me," Will moans, eyes closing briefly.

Hannibal slaps Will's cheek, not too hard, but just enough to force those blue eyes open. "Louder. Who owns you?"

Will's back arches off Hannibal's chest. He opens his eyes as his orgasm slams into him. "Sir owns me!" he sobs as Hannibal strokes him through his orgasm. "P-please don't stop!"

Hannibal smirks. "Good *boy* ," he praises. " *I* own you."

"Sir owns me," Will repeats as he begins to squirm in his lap from overstimulation. Hannibal has to wrap an arm tight around his small waist to keep him in place. He writhes in his place, tries to slip his spent cock from Hannibal's unyielding hand only to roll his hips up in an attempt for more.

Will eagerly rides the thin line between pain and pleasure. Hannibal knows Will's crossed over from pain to pleasure when he no longer tries to get away, but instead jerks into his hand with little finesse. His head lolls back onto his shoulder. The boy is so far gone in pleasure that a litany of heavily accented French falls from his parted lips. The words slur together the closer to his second orgasm he became.

Hannibal shakes his head free from the fingers that grasp and pull his hair, dipping his head down to bite and suck at Will's sun darkened shoulder. Will cries out, and it is the last push he needed to come again. Hannibal can't help himself; it is an impulsive thought he absolutely *has* to act on. Will tastes of sweat and cheap soap. He strokes Will a few more times before he lets his spent cock go. Will pants harshly, whimpers as he writhes in his lap. Hannibal holds Will tightly in place with both arms, rendering his squirming useless and silently signaling that Will is to sit there and take it. When Hannibal does pull away, there is the faint outline of his teeth, the mark of his ownership of Will a stark contrast of dark red against tanned skin. Will slumps against Hannibal. Hannibal raises his come soaked hand to Will's lips, and the boy immediately begins to thoroughly lick his hand clean.

"Clever boy. Such an obediently little pet," he cooes as he watches Will clean up his mess.

Will hums at the praises, grabbing onto his wrist to draw each finger into his mouth, languidly laps at the webbing between his fingers. He shakily turns around in his lap, leans up to kiss him, murmuring 'thank you' between kisses. Hannibal can taste Will's seed on his tongue, and it is a reminder that he, himself, is still achingly hard. Hannibal has been teetering on the edge, and it has taken every bit of willpower not to come in his pants. It twitches underneath Will, and turns the boy's attention away from kissing him. Will rocks back, grinding against his aching cock. Ideally, he would stop him, but instead, he brings him back into a heated kiss, one hand threading through thick curls while the other slips down to Will's ass, groping and encouraging. Hannibal grunts and groans into Will's mouth. Will breaks away from the kiss to surge forward, latching on to Hannibal between his shoulder and neck and sucks *hard.* He keeps Will's head in place, now rutting up against Will.

" *Bite* ," he commands.

And Will does. The stinging pain is enough to push Hannibal over the edge he'd been teetering on. The grip on his hair tightens as his hips jerk up against Will.

It's almost embarrassing that he comes in his pants. Almost. His grip loosens after what seems like an endless wave of pleasure recedes.

“Good boy,” he pants. “Easy, easy. Release.”

Will flexes jaw, biting down harder only briefly before he sits up. He licks his lips, and there is a calmness on Will’s face, a look he has only ever seen while the boy is asleep. He shifts slightly in his lap, pushing himself into a more upright position. He rests his hands on Hannibal’s stomach.

“Sir?”

“Hmm?”

“I think I need a nap now.”

Hannibal rolls his eyes. “Of course you do,” he teases. “Let’s get cleaned up first and then we’ll have ourselves a little nap, yes?”

Will presses close and wraps his legs around Hannibal’s waist and his arms around his neck. “Mmkayy. But you gotta carry me. My legs, I don’t think they work very well.”

Hannibal huffs a soft chuckle. He wraps an arm around Will’s torso and the other underneath Will’s ass. He rocks himself up onto his feet, hoisting Will up a little higher. “Greedy thing. When was the last time you got off?”

Will shrugs lazily as he is carried upstairs. “I dunno. When was the last time you jerked me off?”

Hannibal pauses at the threshold to the bathroom. “Is there a particular reason why?” he asks as he continues inside. He sits Will on the counter and runs a bath. He turns around to look at him, awaiting an answer.

Will tilts his head dismissively. “I live in an abusive home, Sir. Cranking one out is not usually on my list of priorities. Not to mention the lack of privacy, among other things.”

“Like what?”

Will turns bright red. “Unimportant.”

Hannibal leans against the wall and crosses his arms. “That blush says otherwise.”

“I have my list of reasons. Some of them are private reasons, and I would like them to stay that way. Please. I tell you everything when you ask me, but may I keep this one thing to myself for a while? You can psychoanalyze me if you’d like, but please keep it to yourself if you figure it out.” He slides off the counter and strips the rest of his clothes off.

Hannibal tilts his head. “You’re like an open book, Will, but the pages are written in a language that I cannot read.”

Will snorts as he climbs into the bath. He fiddles with the dial, making the water hotter. He brings his knees up to his chest and rests his chin on them. “Probably because I don’t want you to read them.”

Hannibal steps out of his soiled pajama pants and settles in the tub behind Will. Gently, he guides Will back against his chest. “I know so much about you, yet I know so little as well.”

“You know all you need to know about me. The rest is irrelevant.”

Hannibal picks up a cup off the floor beside the tub. He uses it to carefully pour water over Will’s hair. “There is a cold, thick wall around your heart, sweet boy.”

“Yeah, it tends to happen. Can’t be disappointed if you don’t let anyone in, now can you?”

Hannibal doesn’t respond. There is so much that Will is withholding from him. He squeezes a glob of shampoo onto Will’s head, gently massaging it into a lather. He represses a heavy sigh. One day, Will will let him in, will let him truly see him. He’s worked so hard to get Will to open up to him, even if it is just a bit. He’s still got so much work to do.

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“Are you *fucking* shitting me right now, Hannibal Lecter?” Will demands as he throws the jack in hand back into the trunk.

Will is on a rampage, and Hannibal would rather not be in his path. Unfortunately, *he* is the reason for Will’s suddenly hostile behavior. Things were great after Will had his nap, chatting excitedly as Hannibal drove with very arguably very little help from the boy, to this ‘Bubba’s home out in the middle of nowhere. The conversation abruptly ended when he hit one of the many potholes on the backroad they were taking, and his front driverside tire exploded upon impact. Will remained relatively tame as he got out with no hesitation with the intention of changing the tire. His mood immediately turned sour when he lifted the cargo lid where his spare tire *should* have been only to find it empty except for the jack.

“ *Where’s the goddamn spare tire, Hannibal* ?” Will shouts, resting his hands on his hips as he looks expectantly at Hannibal.

Hannibal doesn’t have an answer, because he honestly has no idea. He hasn’t had a reason to put on a spare tire. He doesn’t even know if the Bentely came with one when he bought it. His silence is answer enough to Will and it does not make him happy.

“Jesus fucking Christ, okay,” he sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose. He circles around to what is left of his tire and pulls off the chunk that managed to stay on the rim. He tosses it into the ditch. “We’re about a mile away from Bubba’s. Let’s hope and pray he has a somewhat decent tire in his yard I can put on so we can make it into town. I swear to God, Hannibal…”

Hannibal watches as Will slides into the driver’s seat and adjusts it to his shorter height. Hannibal gets in the passenger seat and puts his hand in his lap as Will carefully drives them the rest of the way. He grows angrier with every bump he can’t avoid, and by the time he turns onto a gravel road, he’s lecturing Hannibal in French, his Cajun accent so thick and heavy that he barely understands him. It’s probably best that he doesn’t. This gravel road feel more horrible than the paved road.

The road, as it turns out, is actually a very long driveway cutting right down the middle of a large, overgrown field with the occasional tree here and there. The driveway opens up into a massive yard, with a small farmhouse style home in the center, and a large, faded red barn cattycorner behind it. Off to the side is an old Lincoln Towncar and beside it, the stained white truck Hannibal recently purchased for Will. Will carefully maneuvers the Bentley over a deep pothole towards the barn, but he stop in front of the house.

On the porch, sitting in a rocking chair with a can and a cigarette in his hand. The man doesn't move, not immediately, until the car comes to a stop. He hauls himself out of his chair and shuffles down the few stairs just a bit unsteady as he approaches the car. Will gets out and so does Hannibal.

"You look like you could use a light, boy," the man says in the thickest southern accent Hannibal has ever heard, not that he's heard many to truly compare. He reaches into the small front pocket of his oil stained grey t-shirt. He offers will a red box, and Will thanks him.

"Ever the gracious man, you are," Will responds as he takes a cigarette and lighter from the box. He places it between his lips, muttering a thanks as he lights it and takes a drag. "How ya been?"

The man, Hannibal assumes is Bubba, shrugs as he takes his pack of cigarettes back and tucks them into his pocket. "Can't complain. I'm breathin' still. How are you?"

"Best I've ever been." He jerks his head towards the car.

Bubba tsks. "I hate to be the bearer of bad news. Just got off the phone a few minutes 'fore you showed up. Need some of that blinker fluid. 'Bout two of 'em."

Will sighs and scratches his head. "Shit outta luck." He jerks his head towards the car. "Blew a tire on a pothole."

Bubba strokes his long, greying beard. "Go on, get it up on the lift. I assume that eerie looking man is the owner of this fine car?"

"Mhm," Will says as he slips into the car.

"While you do that, I think I'm gonna talk to ol' stoic here."

Will shuts the door and rolls down the window, flicking ashes outside the door. "Be nice, Bubby," he says as he pulls away from them and heads towards the barn, leaving Hannibal with Bubba.

Bubba flicks his cigarette butt off into the yard. The man looks to be a bit older than Hannibal, somewhere around his mid forties to early fifties, but judging by the way he drinks and smokes, looks could be deceiving. Bubba is tall, not quite lean, and Hannibal wouldn't consider him fat either. A happy medium. When he speaks, his voice is gruff from years of smoking. Dark circles under his eyes make him look overly tired.

"You're no stranger to Will," he says, quite certain in his statement.

Hannibal tilts his head as he looks into dark brown eyes. He makes a deduction rather quickly about this strange old man. He is definitely a drunk, but he is far from stupid. “I assure you I have no idea what you mean,” he says, curious of the response.

“Come off the bullshit,” he spits. “I know that boy like I know these backroads. He’s stiffer than a board around people he ain’t familiar with. He got out that car looser than a nail in rotting wood. What I like to know is why.”

Hannibal glances towards the barn, watching as Will fiddles with the lift control. “Will passed out in my driveway. I took care of him and told him he’s welcomed into my home to cool off and rest, since I’m the last house on his paper route,” he says truthfully. “I have taken it upon myself to care for the boy when I can. Provide him with food, a safe place to stay for as long as he wishes.”

Bubba lights another cigarette, crossing his arms. “Uncle Bubba ain’t buying it. I know what your kind get up to.”

Hannibal is taken aback. “My kind? What exactly is ‘my kind’?”

“You rich fuckers. I smell it a mile away. I ain’t goddamn stupid.” He turns away and starts walking towards the barn. “Claiming to do something’ nice for us poor folk, but it always comes at a price. So tell me..?”

“Dr. Hannibal Lecter.”

“So riddle me this, Dr. Lecter. What’s a kid like Will owe for such generous nicety?”

Hannibal follows behind. He shouldn’t be as shocked as he is that someone would assume Will owes him a debt for most basic of human needs. He doesn’t expect anything from Will, just obedience and improvement. “Will owes me nothing in return.”

Bubba stops and abruptly turns to face him. “I’ll tell you this one time. If you so much as make him shed a single tear, I’ll blow your head clean off your prissy shoulders. He’s already got enough hurtin’ going on in his life. He don’t need no more.”

“I assure you, he is in very safe and capable hands.”

“He better be,” he muttered, glaring at Hannibal.

They continue on to the barn. By the time they get there, Will is leaning against a table pressed against the wall, half finished cigarette hanging off his lips, He’s writing in a small notebook. He doesn’t glance up as they walk in, but he does when he hears tires crunching in the driveway. His small frame tenses immediately. Hannibal turns to see a lifted pick up truck come to an abrupt stop in front of the barn. The driver drops out of the truck after shutting off the engine. The door slams shut. Into the barn walks Beau Graham. He’d only seen him in passing the one time, but without being hidden by tinted glass windows, Hannibal sees that Will is a carbon copy of the man. Same short, curly hair, same face shape, same piercing blue eyes.

“Will!” he shouts. “You were supposed to be home hours ago, boy!”

Will flinches, but his voice remains even, despite the tension coiling in his body.

“Had some work for him to do,” Bubba says. He wanders over to a fridge nestled in the far corner. He comes back with two beers and throws one to Beau. “Got a truck I need gutted, then this man showed up with a blown tire. Set him straight to work.”

Beau ignores Bubba as he walks up to his son. When he speaks to Will again, it is in French. Hannibal thought Will’s accent was thick when he spoke French, but Beau’s was worse. He hardly understands him as he speaks.

“ I can’t right now, Dad. I’m busy.”

It happens faster than Hannibal could process. Beau nods briefly before he backhands Will so hard across the face that the boy stumbles back and drops his cigarette. Hannibal instinctively takes a step forward, but Bubba grabs him by the wrist.

“Don’t,” he whispers. “You’ll piss him off and it will make shit a whole lot worse for him.”

“I can’t buy it, Dad. You’re gonna have to settle for a case of beer.”

Beau does not hesitate to hit him again. He drops a worn out leather wallet and his keys on the table. “Figure it out, or are you too stupid to even do that? Use that pathetic little head of your and bring me some *goddamn whiskey* like I told you to!”

“...Yes, sir.”

“Get outta here!”

Will lowers his head, grabs the wallet, keys, and the notebook and quickly leaves the barn. He glances up at Hannibal briefly as he passes, jerking his head towards the truck. Hannibal makes a move to follow but Bubba stops him, taking out his own wallet and stuffing a wad of cash into Hannibal's hand.

“He can keep the change,” he murmurs.

Hannibal nods once and heads to the passenger side of the truck. He has to haul himself in. The cab of the truck is filthy and smells of beer. He kicks a few cans out of the way as he closes the door.

“It's not closed all the way. Open it and slams it. Hard,” Will mutters, eyes lock on his father as he makes his way out of the barn.

Hannibal does so, the entire vehicle rocking as he slams is as hard as he could. Will puts the truck in reverse and slowly back away from the barn. He pauses for a moment, hand on the gear shift, before shifting over and up. Suddenly they are lurching forward towards Beau. Beau narrowly avoids being hit when when Will slams on the break. He revvs the engine threateningly before he shifts back in reverse, gunning it. Will is silent as he places his hands on the back of Hannibal's seat in order to turn himself around to look put the rear window.

Hannibal grips the handle above him for dear life as they bump quickly down the long gravel driveway. Hannibal is shocked by the level of control Will has over the truck as he backs in a straight line down the driveway. The moment three of the tires his pavement, he shifts into first and shoots off down the road, smoothly shifting up to third gear. He is still very tense but the moment they turn, he relaxes.

“Will…” Hannibal says gently.

Will holds up his hand. “Don't. Just fucking don't. I don't need your pity right now. What I need from you is just to run into the liquor store and pick up a fifth of the first whiskey you find. Then we'll stop by the tire shop and get you new tires. Once I put the tires on, we're going home. I don't want your sympathy, I don't want to be fucking coddled. I just…I want…” He sighs heavily, rubbing his face. “I don’t know what I want. I need you to make the decision for me.”

Hannibal isn’t quite sure what to say, and that is unusual for him. He is a psychiatrist. He always knows what to say. Hannibal can see something itching just underneath Will’s skin. He wriggles his fingers around, pops his knuckles, and repeats the action every so often. Although Will says he doesn’t want to be coddled, he *needs* it. He considers how he could do just that without overstepping. He watches as Will downshifts as they come to a stop.

“I think I have an idea,” he says.

“Care to shed light on it?”

“Not particularly.”

Will nods slowly as he looks both ways before crossing the intersection. “Got it. You plan on coddling me anyways,” he mutters.

“Just a bit,” Hannibal confesses.

Will clicks his tongue. He glances at Hannibal. “We’ll see how the night goes. You may be sick of me by the end of it.”

“I’ll never grow sick of you, pup.”

He shrugs, turning into a bank parking lot, following the faded yellow arrows to the ATM. “You say that now…” He opens up Beau’s wallet, taking out a card that is peeling at the edges. He rolls down the window and shoves it into the card slot. “Everyone eventually gets sick of me…” He taps away at the screen. Will lets out an aggravated groan. “You dumb motherfucker…” he mutters as he takes out the card. He sits back, looking at the small receipt that printed. “Fucking dumbass! The fuck am I supposed to do with two dollars!”

Hannibal remembers the money Bubba had handed him. “Oh, that reminds me,” he says as he opens his hand to show Will the crumpled wad of cash. “Bubba said keep the change.”

Will snorts, taking the money and counting. “Just call him James. Bubba doesn’t sound right coming from you.”

“James said keep the change,” Hannibal says, smiling softly.

It’s enough to make Will smile. He hands over two twenties and a ten and pockets the rest. He pulls away from the ATM. “Good ol’ Bubba to the rescue.” Will zooms across the street into a parking lot. The truck rattles and offers very little cushion as they bump across the parking lot with very little concern for the truck. He pulls up in front of an unmarked building. “Be quick, please, Sir,” he says, pulling out his smartphone and opening one of his social media apps to scroll through.

Hannibal drops out of the truck and wanders into the rather sketchy looking door with a handwritten sign that just says LIQUOR STORE 21+ ONLY. Considering what part of town they were in, he half expected it to be dungy. He is immediately greeted by a bell ringing and the smell of floor cleaner. He walked up and down the isles and picks up a bottle of whiskey from the bottom shelf, and then with a little consideration, a bottle from the top shelf for himself. He pays for each bottle separately. There wasn’t anyone else in the store, so it only takes him a few minutes to get in and get out. He opens the door and places the paper bags in the floorboard.

“This is ridiculous,” he says as he steps onto the step bar. “Who needs a truck this high off the ground?” He hauls himself up and into the truck, huffing.

Will chuckles. “Someone who wants to give off ‘big dick energy’.”

“Didn’t you say you wanted to lift your truck like this?”

“Yeah, but unlike my father, I actually have big dick energy.”

Hannibal shakes his head with a smile. Will already seems to be feeling a bit better as they head off to their next destination a little further in town. The tire shop is a small building. The walls are line with different types and sized tires. There were stacks of them in every corner and the air was permeated by the scent of rubber. He follows Will as he wanders around the small area, looking between the signs and the small notebook he held in his hand. He stops when he finds what he’s looking for. He makes a small sound of satisfaction and makes his way to the counter where a rather small man stands, waiting.

“How can I help you?”

Will pushes the notebook towards the man. “Kay, so I need two tires, this size, as well as two stock rims for a 2003 Bentley Arnage T.”

The man types away on the computer in front of him. “Never seen one of those before,” he says as he looks at the notebook.

Will nods. “It's nice. Smooth when the tires aren't blown out by potholes.”

The man scoffs. “Wouldn't catch me dead in a luxury car on this side of town. Do you want all weather?”

“Please.”

“Okay. New or used?”

“New.”

“Okay, your total is on the screen. It'll be a few to get them put on the rims and balanced.”

Will holds out his hand to Hannibal, wriggling his fingers. “No need. I can do it myself.”

Hannibal just hands over his entire wallet. He does bother looking at the total. He does, however, pay attention to which card Will decides to use. It doesn't *really* matter. Hannibal has a card specifically for Will's many projects he wants to do. Hannibal just wants to be sure to repay what's spent so Will has, quite frankly, more than enough to complete his projects. Will doesn't really look at the card, just slides up the first card he touches, which is his debit card. He taps it against the card reader, putting it back when it beeps.

“Type in your PIN,” he says as the man rolls out two tires.

Hannibal scoffs as he does. He picks up his wallet Will left sitting on the counter, watching as Will picks up the two tires and walks out the door to the truck, throwing them in the bed. He comes back for the rims.

“Grab the receipt and hold on to it. Tires have warranty on them and I'd like to be able to exchange them with little issue if there's a problem.”

The man behind the counter hands Hannibal the receipt, and they're out the door. The rims join the tires. Hannibal looks begrudgingly at the truck. Surly, there is an easier way in? He watches Will grab onto the handle and in one fluid motion, pushes himself off the large front tire and plops into the driver's seat. Okay. So there *is* no easier way I side. He copies Will the best he can. It *did* give him a bit more leverage without having to bend his knee to his chest to step up on the bar. It still isn't great, but it was better. Will is smirking at him as he settles in and closes the door.

“What?”

“Why didn't you do that the first two times?”

“I didn't know any better.”

Will shakes his head. “You've got a loooot to learn, old man.”

“Going to teach this old dog new tricks?”

“You know how to change a tire?”

Hannibal does, but he shrugs. “In theory.”

“Maybe this pup can teach you a new trick.”

Will's mood has greatly improved, Hannibal notes as they banter back and forth. He's more playful now, poking fun at Hannibal and his inability to climb into the truck. Once back to

James', Will is speeding down the driveway. Hannibal has to hold on to the bottles of whiskey to keep them from breaking. Will whips the truck around and backs right up to the barn doors. Hannibal hands him Beau's cheap bottle of whiskey. He opens up the arm rest, picking up a small, round black container. He opens it and smell of mint fills the cab.

"Compensation," he mutters, shoving the container in his pocket and dropping out of the truck.

Beau and James are sitting in lawn chairs just outside the barn. Will throws the keys and wallet at Beau, dropping the paper bag in his lap. Hannibal slides out, sitting the bottle he bought for himself on the work table. Will opens the tailgate, climbing i to the bed by stepping onto the rear tire and over the side. He rolls out the two tires. With the rims in hand, he steps off the tailgate.

"Alright," he huffs and he takes out that container he'd taken from the console. He pinches it's contents a places a stringy wad in his lower lip. He spits into a nearby trashcan. "Lets get this project started. Come on."

Hannibal raises his eyebrows. Will puts him to work. He guides him through how to put the tires on their rims, how to balance them. Will rolls over the tire they will be pointing on. He explains where he should place the jack, pointing to the part of the frame. He shows him how to use the impact wrench to get the badly dented rim.

"Christ," Will says as he slips beneath the car. "Do you ever do maintenance on this thing, Sir? Front brake pads are damn near dead. I'm shocked there's no grinding going on. I'll have to replace them before winter hits."

"Something to keep you busy, I suppose," Hannibal murmurs.

Will chuckles. "I have plenty to keep me busy for the rest of the summer. Anyway. Lift the tire up. Line it up with the holes. You wanna put the lugnuts on in a star pattern loosely." Hannibal follows Will's directions. "Good job. Now go back and tighten them."

Will examines Hannibal's work, giving it a heavy shake to make sure it was on good. Hannibal steps away as Will lowers the Bentley back onto its wheels. He skims over the tires and adds the proper amount of air into it.

"Good as new," Will says as puts away the things he's used. He drops the notebook back on the table. "I assume this is yours, Sir?" He nods towards the bottle.

"Mhm. It is."

Hannibal picks it up while Will expertly backs out and around Beau's truck. He leaves the car running as he gets out. He picks up the spare and puts it in its place. He opens the passenger door, one foot, when Beau yells.

"Where do you think you're going, boy?"

"Anywhere but here."

“Get yer ass back here!”

“I'd rather eat paint. I ain't comin’ home tonight. Fend for yourself!”

Beau stands up, and Will quickly slams the door shut behind him. Hannibal takes that as his cue to *hurry the fuck up* and get in the driver's seat before Beau could make it to the car. Hannibal locks the doors just as Will's father grabs onto the handle. Hannibal doesn't hesitate to put the car in reverse let the car roll back away. Unlike Will, he didn't posses the driving skill to back down the long driveway with ease, which is a bit humiliating that someone a little over half his age. He turns around and takes them home.

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Will is happy to see Hannibal's massive home come into view. It welcomes him with open arms as he bends down to slide the key he keeps on his collar into the lock. He kicks off his shoes and places them on the shoe rack. He shuffles to the kitchen, scooping the wad of tobacco from his lip and throwing it away. Despite rather lavish look of the house, it feels like home. His face still stings a bit from being backhanded, but it's easy to ignore as Hannibal comes in with his paper bag.

“I appreciate your help today, pup,” he says as he gets down two whiskey glasses and plops a few ice cubes into each. He pulls out the bottle, twisting it's cap until the seal breaks. He fills both glasses halfway, sliding one over to Will. “You've earned it today.”

“I haven't done anything today,” Will murmurs but thanks Hannibal as he takes his glass. He swirls it around as he looks at the amber liquid.

“You taught me how to change a tire. Very well, actually.”

Will scoffs lightly as he picks up the glass.

“Don’t knock it back, Will. Have some class,” Hannibal scolds playfully.

Will grins. “Acting like you ain’t seen where I’m from.” He taps the glass gently on the counter, raises it up before drinks it down in one gulp.

Hannibal curls his lip up in mock-disgust. “Animal,” he says as he takes what Will would consider a dainty little sip. Suitable for Hannibal’s character.

Will bows. When he speaks, he lets his thick accent make an appearance. “Born and raised in a Louisiana backwoods barn.” He pours himself another glass, leaning against the island. This time, he does as Hannibal expects him to do: sips it slow and savors the burn and its woody undertones. “So,” he says. “What are we doing tonight? I’m all your until morning.”

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